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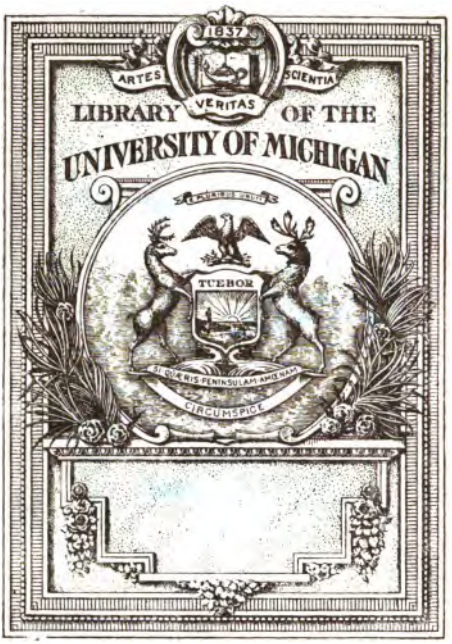

THE GIFT OF
J. Herbert Russell

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NAN DARRELL;

OR,

THE GIPSY MOTHER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE HEIRESS," "THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER," "THE SQUIRE," "THE PRINCE AND THE PEDLAR," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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NAN DARRELL;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

I met a little cottage girl,
She was eight years old, she said.
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That cluster'd round her head,
She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her face was fair, and very fair,
Her beauty made me glad.
Wordsworth.

WHAT a glorious day! Not a heavy cloud in all the sky, only a few fleecy forms floating across the rich blue vault; and the sun shining out in all its summer splendour as though it had never shown before, looking down for the first time on the gladsome earth, instead of having run its course unnumbered years—undimmed in lustre—unimpaired in power.

Where are the works of man? his labours of the past? The eye looks on ruin; or time hath swept away even that poor trace; and a fable or tradition alone remains. But time hath no power over the Eternal or the works of His hands—itself His slave.

Out! Out! treading the green turf—lying on some flowery bank—dreaming beneath the leafy shade. Who

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would be pent up within four stone walls on such a day, when he could forth with the blue above, and the green below, and a thousand gleesome things around? What though the walls are gilded, and the lofty ceiling fretted; the Persian carpet soft as the woodland moss; whilst the luxuries of art, the beauties of genius, lend their splendours with a gorgeous profusion? Still it is only a magnificent prison. We see but little of the blue heaven; scarcely more of the varied tints of earth. The air we breathe is close; and the heart flutters to be free, as the imprisoned butterfly on the first day of spring. Who would not rather go forth into the fresh, free air, than be a prisoner even in a gilded cage? And nature, is she not more beautiful than art? Doth not that beauty make the step more buoyant, and the heart more light?

How one loves a summer day with all its gentle glories—its murmured music—its delicious fragrance—its warmth, gladdening, not oppressing—its soft and soothing air—its dreamy feel, its shadows, and its lights—its brilliant visions, and its stirring thoughts—and more, far more, its loving memories! Alack! Alack! that in our changing clime there should be few such days! But then we love them all the more even for their very rareness. What high born beauty would set store upon her diamonds, if every beggar girl could boast the like.

It was just on one of these rare days, which some so rave about, that Mrs. Arnold, leaving the inn, at Cowford with a sketch-book in her hand, strolled through the little, straggling village, whilst the blacksmith, who promised well, however he might perform, tried his skill in repairing her carriage, too much injured in an encounter with a loaded wagon in a narrow lane, to allow her to proceed upon her journey. With all her partiality for the little village of Cowford, the horror of slandering, even a country inn, we must acknowledge that its best room, we will say nothing of its worst, was neither lofty, gilded, nor fretted. Its bōards, bare, save a small space in the centre covered by complicated pieces of worsted and packthread, could not well be mistaken for a Persian carpet, whilst its decorations in

the way of art or genius were limited to a display of glass and china, in a corner cupboard, (the broken parts turned to the wall,) an old fashioned mug in the centre of the mantelpiece, flanked by two white cats with red and yellow collars, bought of the wandering Italian boys, that if they caught no mice, at least stole no cream, and lived most amicably with two parti-coloured parrots, the workmanship of the same skilful hands.

Nothing could exceed the civility of the honest landlord, and landlady; and their distress at her accident, and pleasure at her having escaped unhurt, were expressed with a warmth, whose sincerity could not be doubted, though when more interested motives came into play, they could not be expected to feel any very great regret for the harmless chance which placed in their little yard an elegant carriage with handsome arms, certainly not an every day occurrence. But the host's civility, though exerted to the utmost, could not perform the supernatural. The best room continued small, close, and unpleasant from a stale smell of tobacco; and Mrs. Arnold, refined almost to fastidiousness, though unwilling to annoy her attentive hostess by complaints, was glad to escape from her repeated excuses for all things being in a caddle, as she said, and seek proper aid, and subjects for her pencil, in the environs of the secluded village.

And see! she has found a subject for her pencil. Not in a stately cathedral—not in an ivied ruin, with its tale of the days gone by—not in a rock or mountain, the poor little village of Cowford could boast of none of these for there was nothing about it that could even hint of the sublime in art or nature; no, her pencil is employed on three village children, not fancy village children, such as painters imagine to adorn the walls of the wealthy, but real *bonâ fide* village children, dirty, ragged, merry little creatures. Kings and Queens on their thrones, with their bowing courtiers might be grander, and more gorgeous; but I doubt if ever one was happier than two at least of those ragged and untended children.

To be sure cleanliness is all very proper, and very

delightful; but somehow or other, children do find great pleasure in playing in the dirt; at least, I know one that did, despite all the exordiums of all the nursemaids; her loving mother, as long as she was well and active, never heeding an extra frock or two in the week, or hands a little more grimy than befited a young lady, and really I don't think her hands look much the worse for it, though I do sometimes marvel how they ever became clean again. Now-a-day girls must not gambol in the dirt, or in the clean; they must play woman from the very cradle. What a blessing to have been born a hundred years ago.

Mrs. Arnold finished her sketch to her satisfaction, as regarded two of her subjects, but candidly admitted her third attempt to be a failure; and yet but for that third she would scarcely have been at the trouble of taking the sketch. She looked again, and again; she touched, and retouched; rubbed out, and put in, and then gave up the attempt in despair: she had the features, but she could not catch the expression. If for one moment she flattered herself that the likeness was complete, the next she had the mortification of perceiving that such a belief had been but self delusion.

The two other children were drawn to the life: fat, healthy looking little creatures, with no graces but those of childhood; who would grow up strong, sturdy peasants, fited for the wear and tear of life, having bodies to bear its labours, and its ills; and minds not formed of such delicate materials as would aggravate the evils of the actual, or add those of the imaginary. These were on her paper exactly as they were in life; the oldest, a girl of eight, all laughter and good humour: the youngest, a boy of two, occasionally joining his fainter and less joyous laugh to that of his companions, yet more often given tokens of a fretful and impatient spirit; but to depict the third was beyond her power; and she gave up the endeavour. It was not so much that her features were more delicately moulded than those of her companions, it was that the expression of those features was never the same for five minutes together; in this lay her power of attraction, and the impossibility of repre-

senting her correctly. A sunny joyousness, a loving softness seemed, at times, the natural expression; but whether such really was the predominant temper of her mind, it was impossible for a stranger to decide, though none of this changeableness could have been assumed to mock or attract that stranger, for Mrs. Arnold, hid by a clump of firs, had not been perceived by the children. Long after the pencil had been laid aside, did the traveller continue to gaze on the laughing group.

The scene of their sport was a rather marshy green, varied with some small hillocks, scarcely larger than ant hills, and tall tufts of rushes. Duck and ducklings were swimming over or floating down the shallow stream, that bounded the green on the right, gurgling over its pebbly bed with large shoals of the little minnow, glancing, sporting in its chrystal waters. A rustic bridge with its narrow plank and single rail, was thrown across some paces higher up; and scattered cottages with small orchards and smaller gardens, bounded the home view on the other side of the brook. The sun shone out on this little green, with its irregular hillocks, full upon the playful children; but not with oppressive power, for a gentle breeze came off the downs over the secluded village which was situated in an extensive hollow.

It was a day all life and joy. The pettish boy was seated on one of the hillocks, whilst his sister and the younger girl, particularly the latter, exerted all their powers to amuse him.

"There, James, look! oh, pretty! pretty!" cried his little nurse, for such she was, though not many years older than himself, "There, look! look!" pointing out some pieces of broken crockery which she had arranged to the admiration of herself and the other girl.

James looked for a moment with a half smile, then turning away with a discontented cry, plunged his hand into a dirt pie by his side, whose size and skilful building, a former work of his nurse, had before won his approbation.

"Don't cry Jemmy, don't cry, look here!" exclaimed his indefatigable amuser, catching up the pieces of pot-

tery, and flinging them round and about with the grace and flexibility, though not the skill of an Indian Juggler.

The tiny laugh of the fretful infant mingled with the joyous burst of his better tempered sister; then it died away—a frown came again over his heavy brow, and with a peevish wail, and vexed shake of his head and shoulders, he turned sullenly away, looking desiringly on some scattered flowers which had before amused, and then disgusted.

"Oh, the flowers, Jemmy, dear! do you want the flowers? Well, don't cry, and you shall have them;" exclaimed the girl, without the shadow of ill humour at his peevishness, picking them up and placing them in his lap, from whence he immediately threw them with the petulance of passion.

"Don't you like them? see! see pretty flowers!" showering them down upon him with coaxing words, in despite of his fighting, till even his ill humour was vanquished by her patience, and the frown disappeared.

"Now that is a good boy, Jem," she exclaimed, passing her arms round his neck, and kissing him; then, starting up, she flung the flowers over her own head, and that of the little girl beside, many clinging to their ragged dress and tangled hair. "Now, Jemmy, laugh! laugh! I'll dance for good little Jem;" and away bounded the graceful child, keeping admirable time to her own sweet humming, now advancing slowly, with an almost stately elegance; then springing from side to side with the quickness of the glancing trout; and occasionally turning little Jemmy's sister, who less active, and almost convulsed with laughter at her companion's play, made no attempt to join the dance.

"Look! look, Jemmy, how pretty!" exclaimed his sister, clapping her hands with joy, as the young dancer, inspirited by the shouts and bursts of laughter of her charges, increased her exertions to amuse them, till want of breath compelled a cessation of her efforts, notwithstanding the tyrannical monosyllable of the baby looker on;—"More! More!"

"Who taught you to dance, my little girl?" asked

Mrs. Arnold, advancing from the clump of firs by which she had been screened.

"No one, ma'am," replied the child, rising from the green on which she had flung herself and making a courtesy, hanging her head half abashed at the presence of a stranger, yet half won by her kindly smile.

"Then you have taught yourself, and like dancing," continued Mrs. Arnold, not from any suspicion that she had really taken lessons of Vestris, or D'Egville, but simply because she knew of nothing better to say, and wished to hear those gentle tones again.

"Jemmy and Susy like me to dance ma'am ; and I love Jemmy, don't I?" kissing the sturdy boy, who was far too deeply engaged in staring at the stranger, and deciding whether he should cry or not, to heed her endearment.

"Are they your brother and sister?"

"No ma'am," she said with another courtesy, venturing to look full in her face, "I have no brother, and no sister, these be Susy, and Jemmy Watts ; and I take care of them !"

Mrs. Arnold could not but smile at the protecting air assumed by the fairy like looking creature before her, younger than her oldest charge, to judge from her appearance, and of a far more slight, and delicate figure.

"So you take care of Susy and Jemmy Watts :—but who takes care of you?"

"God, ma'am, when I am good, and try to do as he bids me."

Mrs. Arnold was touched with the feeling and simplicity with which this was said. It was not the mere utterance of the lips ; the repetition of a lesson ; it was evident that however deficient her knowledge on other points, she felt she had a heavenly protector, and was anxious to obey his will.

"Have you no mother?"

"No ma'am, mother has been gone this long time;" and the former joyous expression left her features:—she had known the want of a mother.

"And no father?"

"No! little Kate has no father, and no mother," shaking her head sadly.

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Arnold pityingly. The girl looked up in the stranger's face, and involuntarily pressed closer to her side. Children and dogs can out-Lavater Lavater, without knowing his rule—they can tell whom to trust, and whom to love.

"You good for nothing, idle slut!" exclaimed a woman in a wrathful voice, rushing from a neighbouring cottage, and dealing little Kate a forcible box on the ear, as she passed her in her course to the shallow stream in which master Jemmy was wading, to his great delight, shooing and shouting to frighten the ducks, having taken advantage of his nurse's attention being occupied by the stranger to pursue his own devices, the which invariably tended to evil towards himself, or others.

Poor Kate uttered a sharp cry, and then half smothered some heavy sobs, hiding her face in Mrs. Arnold's gown against whom the force of the blow had thrown her.

It was the work of a minute for the robust virago to snatch up the kicking boy, cover him with kisses, despite his struggles, and stride back towards the cottage.

"Get in, you little wicked slut! you would let Jemmy be drowned any day. I'll be the death of you if you do. Get in! I say; and don't tumble the lady's gown," giving the child a violent push towards the gate, and bestowing another on Susy, as she added, "that little wretch makes you as bad as herself."

"It was all my fault," interposed Mrs. Arnold, speaking gently to the fury, in the hope of softening her wrath, and saving the girl from further punishment. "I kept the poor child talking to me."

"It is all one for that. She have done the same a thousand times," replied the woman bluntly. "Some hurt will certainly come to my Jemmy; and as sure as there does, I'll be the death of her;" coaxing and caressing the still struggling squalling boy, who gave way to his anger at having been deprived of the pleasure of wading in the wet, and frightening the ducks.

"Indeed you are wrong. Little Kate is very fond of

your boy, and has been trying to amuse him for the last half hour; besides, that stream would scarcely drown an infant of six months."

"No odds to you whether it would or not; and the good for nothing little wretch would as soon let Jemmy go in where it was deep, as here. I'll teach her to mind what she is about;" striding on to the cottage as she spoke with a look that made Mrs. Arnold shudder.

"Stop! Stop! listen to me! I am sure the little girl will be very careful for the future."

"'Twas throwing words away, for still,
The wrathful woman held her will."

She neither stopped nor listened to the stranger's mild address, but strode on more fiercely to the cottage, fastening the wicket behind her with a padlock as soon as she had entered.

"Ah, ma'am, poor little Kate leads a sad life; and the more a body talks, the worse Betty Watts is, pitiklar when in her tantrums, like now. She'll beat the poor child all the more 'cause you spoke, and to spite you ma'am for standing here. Would you please to walk into my poor cottage? You seems frightened and no wonder neither," continued the speaker struck by Mrs. Arnold's paleness, as that lady turned from the wicket over which she had been leaning towards the person who addressed her, a pleasing looking woman, tidily dressed.

"Thank you, I am indeed shocked. Could nothing be done to save the poor child?" she asked, as the sobs of little Kate came from the closed cottage.

"I am sure ma'am, I wishes there could, for a better child never lived; always willing and civil to her betters and elders;—and so kind to all the little ones; and that Jem Watts have got the temper of his mother—enough to vex a saint—and Betty making him worse by spoiling on him, as she does, she don't care for any one else in the 'varsal world. Then to see poor little Kate playing with un by the hour together, and letting un pull her and thump her about, and she never giving a cross

word, and always looking contented, and never speaking agin him, or his mother, though she beats and half starves her. I am sure I wonders how she lives through it; no body else could that was not as sweet tempered; and if the neighbours did not give her some scraps sometimes unknown'st to Betty. I wish some one would take her clean away, and so does all the village; for every one likes little Kate."

"Is there no one to interfere?"

"Lauks! ma'am who is there? But please to walk a little further this way, there is no use in angering Betty Watts, by letting her know we be talking of her; she is always ready to do a spiteful thing. You see ma'am her husband is overseer, and don't like to be meddled with, though to be sure he bean't as bad as his wife; and there is no gentlefolks here to meddle; and Mr. Binks of the King's Head, tho'f he's sorry for the child, can't do nothing, 'cause Betty says she is cousin to her mother, and bought her, as a body may say, with an old hat, and some other things. Then Kate warn't born here; and nobody knows which is her parish."

"I thought she told me that she had no mother."

"She had as good have none, and better though she ain't unkind to her, when she is here; but then she has been away these three years, and may be dead for aught we knows. It is hard to say where Nan Darrell is."

"Is she so unnatural as to go and leave her child to strangers?"

"Lauk, ! ma'am. Nan an't like other folks: she is crazy, poor thing, and don't know what she does, and would sell any thing in the world for a bit of finery, fancying herself a lady, and telling every body to courtesy to her."

"Poor Kate, indeed!" said Mrs. Arnold with a sigh. "Has she no father?"

"No, ma'am; and as a body may say, never had. Poor Nan came back to the village some years ago with little Kate, a baby, and pretended to be very grand, and said she had a rich husband, and when she came again she told us he was dead. She did not stay long, for there is gipsy blood in her, so she can't bide quiet any

where ; and she has not been seen these three years, though she seemed fond of the child, and cried when she left her. I wish something could be done for little Kate, all the neighbours cry shame, but that only makes Betty worse ; and you had better not go to the cottage alone, ma'am, for she would as soon beat you as the child, when she is in one of her ways."

The history of the poor child dwelt on Mrs. Arnold's mind during her walk back to the inn, as also during the very primitive repast provided by her attentive landlady. The answers of Mrs. Binks confirmed all she had heard of Kate and her mother, and Mrs. Arnold, the gentlest and kindest of human beings, puzzled herself to devise some plan by which the child might be secured from the power of her tyrant ; for the forming of which plan there was more time, as the faithless blacksmith had not kept his word; and it would be late in the evening before she could pursue her journey. She could not have dismissed the child from her thoughts had she wished it; the animation, the varying expression of her delicate features, the richness of her joyous laugh, the wild grace of every movement, had made too deep an impression to be easily effaced; and she retraced her steps towards the little green with some faint hope of again encountering the girl without her tyrant, when she might learn what were her own wishes. Her hope was gratified :—she had scarcely reached the fir clump when she encountered little Kate with a pitcher in one hand—a bunch of flowers in the other. The child set down her pitcher to make a lower courtesy, looking at Mrs. Arnold with a sad, yet grateful expression ; and would then have proceeded, had not that lady stopped her.

"I am afraid, poor child, your talking to me gained you a beating."

"Never mind, ma'am ; if she had not beat me for that, she would for something else."

"Does that cruel woman often beat you?"

"Oh yes ! ma'am, very often;" and the poor girl shuddered, putting her hand involuntarily to the side of her head, which still showed signs of the violence of

the blow; then added, as if willing to excuse her: "but then, ma'am, she says I deserve it. Yet indeed, indeed, I try to be good, and do as she tells me. I hope I shall do better when I grow older."

The stranger could not but be touched with her humble, forgiving, hopeful temper.

"Where are you going with that pitcher, and those pretty flowers?"

"Home, ma'am."

What a home! thought Mrs. Arnold.

"Would you like some of the flowers, ma'am? Granny Wheeler let me pick them for little Jemmy to please Mrs. Watts; but two or three will do for him, only I must not stay," casting a hurried look towards the cottage.

"But don't you like flowers yourself, my little girl? asked Mrs. Arnold, stroking back the tangled, sunny locks from the open brow, as she took the nosegay held timidly towards her.

"Yes, ma'am, very much; but then I like to see Jemmy and Susy play with them better: besides, Mrs. Watts says I must work."

"Here is something for the flowers, Kate," said Mrs. Arnold, willing to try her further."

"Oh no ma'am, thank you. I don't want anything: —you spoke so kind—and Granny will give me plenty more. You are very welcome," drawing back with instinctive delicacy.

"Yes, I am sure I am welcome; but if I take your flowers, you must take this," holding out a bright crown piece.

It was irresistible.

"What a pretty white penny!" exclaimed the child, snatching it in an ecstacy of delight, then letting it fall again into Mrs. Arnold's hand with a crimson blush, ashamed of her eagerness.

"Take it Kate; it is yours."

"Mine? oh thank you, ma'am!"

"And what will you do with it?" asked the giver, after allowing her to enjoy its possession for some moments undisturbed.

"Keep it, ma'am; and look at it;" exclaimed the child with quickness, clutching it firmly as she spoke.

"But it would buy many things, Kate."

"But then I should not have it to look at, should I?" inquired the child with increasing confidence.

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Arnold with a smile; "but you might buy things quite as pretty, and more useful."

Little Kate was silent for some moments, turning the white penny over and over: now grasping it firmly, as though she feared to lose it, then putting it off a little way as if to ascertain her power of enduring a separation from her treasure. It was a hard trial. The stranger watched her movements, and the varying expression of her features; but was silent. The decision should be her own.

That decision was made—the pretty white penny was hid by the closing fingers; and the eager questioner pressed close to Mrs. Arnold, looking up in her face with the simple trust of childhood.

"Will you buy Granny Wheeler a Bible with it? a great large one, that she can read? If that is not enough, here is this; producing a penny and a farthing from some secret plait in her ragged frock, where these treasures had been hoarded for many a day, more in gratitude to the donors, than from any innate miserly propensity. "Won't you buy it?" she asked in a disappointed tone, finding that Mrs. Arnold made no reply.

"Do you want nothing for yourself?" inquired that lady. "Should not you like a new frock?"

"This is ragged to be sure;—and Jenny Milsom laughs at it;—and it is dirty too," remarked the child, looking down upon her dress with a sad and thoughtful air; and then again questioning with increased eagerness. "Would it buy both?"

"It is not enough at present to buy either: but you shall have whichever you choose."

Little Kate scarcely hesitated.

"Then, ma'am, please buy the Bible for Dear Granny. She is so kind,—and teaches me to read—and gives me

something to eat—and I am often very hungry; and I can try and wash my frock—and Mrs. Watts says it is quite good enough for me. Besides I have a better for Sunday; and must not mind Jenny's laughing. Granny will be so glad!"

The tears came into Mrs. Arnold's eyes and she could not speak. The child saw her emotion, yet guessed not that it was caused by her own generous self-denial; but thinking only of the reason why her own tears fell, pressed still closer to the stranger, and taking her hand looked up in her face with a gentle pity, her own eyes glistening as she spoke.

"Poor lady! does any one beat you, too? And you so good and kind. I wish I was a great, big man and an overseer; and then no one should hurt you."

Dirty, ragged as she was, Mrs. Arnold snatched the astonished child to her heart, giving way to a passionate gush of tears as she did so. She had before fancied a resemblance to her own little girl, taken from her at nearly the same age, and at that moment she almost believed that it was her darling Mary, returned to her from the grave.

"Kate! Kate! What are you about, you little idle wretch?" called out the wrathful Mrs. Watts across the green, having watched the child behind the clump, and being unable to account for her delay.

"Oh, ma'am, I must go;" exclaimed the terrified girl, bursting from the arms that still detained her, snatching up her pitcher, and hurrying towards the virago, whose loud scolding might be heard at a considerable distance.

Calming her emotion, Mrs. Arnold came out on the green in time to see the furious Betty Watts force little Kate into the cottage, using awful threats the while. Emboldened by her indignation, the usually timid and gentle traveller would have faced the fury alone, probably to the advantage of none concerned, but fortunately, she espied, at a little distance, her footman and Mr. Binks, who was doing the gracious and hospitable, showing the lions of Cowford to his guest. A beckon brought them to her side; and a few words explained

her wishes and intentions. Mr. Binks did not look particularly delighted at the idea of encountering the furious Betty Watts; but as Mrs. Arnold entered the cottage first, it was impossible to refuse her request to follow.

That lady's movements had been hastened by cries of pain, and well was it for little Kate that the impulse of humanity had for once supplied the place of decision of character.

The child was crouching in a corner with clasped hands, pleading in vain for pity. A broad red mark across her neck showed that one blow had already been given, and the stick was descending a second time, when Mrs. Arnold, springing forward, threw her arms round the girl to protect her, who, on her part, with a joyful cry clung closely to her preserver, whilst the footman seized the falling weapon, and tore it from the woman's grasp.

"How dare you come here?" demanded Betty fiercely, placing her arms a-kimbo, and eyeing the intruders with such wrathful looks that Mr. Binks drew back.

"For your own sake be silent!" said Mrs. Arnold in a more commanding tone than she had ever used in her life before. "Your cruelty to this poor girl is deserving of punishment; and your violence is disgraceful. You a mother, and not feel for a child! Little Kate goes with me."

"Who are you, that you should take her? She is my cousin's child, and left to my care;" replied the woman a little less fiercely, somewhat awed by the manner of the speaker, though still looking willing to attack her, but for dread of the tall footman.

"I am not one who will suffer cruelty to a defenceless child," remarked Mrs. Arnold with gentle firmness, moving towards the door with the still sobbing Katherine clinging to her.

"Jem, Jem, don't let her go!" screamed Betty to her husband, who entered the cottage at the moment. "You be overseer; and the girl's mother is my cousin."

Jem seemed perplexed as to the course most likely to

satisfy his furious wife, and not offend the lady and her determined looking attendant. As usual with waverers, his conduct contented none. He asserted his right of retaining the child as being overseer and related to Kate's mother; but that right was asserted too faintly to please his wrathful consort, and served him nothing with the stranger.

"This not being the child's parish you ~~can have~~ no right to interfere; particularly as I undertake her future maintenance; whilst the ill treatment she has received, of which you must have been aware, will warrant me in taking her from your charge. Let her go with me without further violence, or I apply to Sir Thomas Lenster, who is one of my oldest friends."

"I am sure, ma'am, I never did the child no harm; and you may take her if you please," stammered out the overseer, alarmed at the threat of an application to Sir Thomas Lenster, well known as a rigid magistrate: but his wife, though also a little frightened, would not yield so easily.

"You are a chicken-hearted fool, Jem. Nan Darrel left the child with me, and I cannot let her go with a stranger. If children do wrong they must be beat."

"Who wants Nan Darrel? Here she is!" exclaimed a cracked voice. "But you might show better manners, and call me Lady Darrell," continued the new comer, a wild looking little woman, drest in the most fantastic style with worn out finery, passing Mr. Binks, and advancing into the room with a half proud, half mincing step, and a mock gracious air.

"Just come in time, Lady Darrell," said Betty Watts with pretended respect, seeing the advantage to be gained from winning her cousin to become her ally. Just come in time. This strange lady wants to take little Kate away with her, no one knows where; but I be sartin sure that you won't let her."

"Who is the lady?" asked Nan Darrell, with a ludicrous assumption of dignity.

"One of the best ladies that ever lived; who has plenty of money; and will take good care of the child,"

replied the footman quickly, offended at her question, and her manner.

"Why do you answer? let the lady speak for herself: —you are only a servant," remarked the poor, crazy creature, with a haughty toss of the head highly displeasing to the footman, turning her back upon him as she spoke.

His mistress's presence and immediate reply checked the expression of his wrath.

"I am Mrs. Arnold of Beechen Cliff, and will take great care of the child who has been cruelly treated, by your cousin."

Nan Darrel looked at the speaker, and understanding her superiority at a glance, answered promptly and joyfully, in better language than could have been expected, making awkward courtesies as she spoke.

"The child shall go, for you are a born lady I can see; and you shall teach her to dance, and play music, and all that ladies do; for I'll tell you what," coming close up to her and laying her finger on her lip, "but you must not tell again, little Kate is a lady too! You shall know how some day or other; so you must take great care of her."

"A lady! Is she not your child?" asked Mrs. Arnold, struck with the woman's earnest manner, and the wild graces of her portégé, not often found in village children.

"My child! To be sure she is! Who says she is not? And ain't I a lady? a lady in my own light!" demanded the poor creature angrily, mincing about with pretended dignity and arranging a scarlet rag thrown round her as a scarf.

"Depend on my taking great care of the child," observed Mrs. Arnold, distressed at her display of folly, though scarcely able to suppress a smile, and wondering at herself for having woven a romantic tale with that dirty ragged child as heroine, based on the idle dreams of madness. If there was something in the child superior to the common run, as there undoubtedly was, there required little imagination to believe that her now crazy mother might, in her better days, have boasted some-

thing of the like superiority. There was evidence of gipsy blood, though something softened in the dark eyes and locks of the crazy mother: and though the child's hair was of a sunny brown, instead of a raven black, she too had a dark hazel eye with a bronzed cheek.

"Be a good girl, and do as the lady tells you," observed Nan, approaching her daughter, who had for some time been looking at her, though still holding Mrs. Arnold's gown.

Kate made no reply, but clung closer to her protectress with a perceptible shudder justified by the wild light in her mother's eye.

"Will you go with me, Kate? Or stay with your favourite Granny Wheeler, or some other friend?" asked Mrs. Arnold.

"Go with you:"—exclaimed the child with a passionate energy she had not shown before, whispering as her protectress stooped to calm and caress her: "they will beat me, when you are gone;" glancing in alarm at Betty and her mother.

"You shall go with me, my poor child."

"Why Nan Darrel you sold her to me:— you know you did," exclaimed Betty Watts.

"Sold her, indeed!" replied her cousin, indignant at the charge. "I said you might take care of her a bit, whilst I went on my travels. But how could you teach her to be a lady I should like to know? and is she not to marry a great lord one of these days—else a king? And is it fit that she should wait on your children? I shall go to court then; and let the king kiss my hand;" she continued, spreading out her robe, adjusting her tawdy rags, and bridling up to look grand. "I shall be a great lady myself then."

A burst of laughter from all but Mrs. Arnold, who was shocked at this folly, and Kate who was frightened, aroused the poor creature's wrath.

"You may laugh now; but when Kate is a Queen, and I am a grand lady, you shall all be sent to Bridewell."

"Never mind their laughing," said Mrs. Arnold, soothingly; "but remember in the presence of all here

you give up little Kate to me, engaging not to claim her again."

"Yes, she may go with you ; but mind this ; she will be a grand lady one of these days."

"What makes you think so ?" inquired Mrs. Arnold, curious to ascertain the origin of her belief.

"Ah, my lady ! you are very sly," exclaimed the woman with a peculiar expression ; "but I will tell you —only you must not tell again," she added, speaking in a confidential whisper. "My mother knew all things —and I know more than people think. I know,—What a pretty handkerchief?" breaking off abruptly, and smoothing down Mrs. Arnold's dress. "Could not you give me a few of these things? Kate's mother should be handsomely dressed. I do the best I can, but the fashions change, and a lady in her own light should have clothes like grand people. Just a new hat now with feathers ; I have had this some time," pointing to the one she wore, whose appearance certainly did not belie her assertion.

"Come to the King's Head, and I will see what I can do for you," replied Mrs. Arnold, gently.

"Thank you ;" courtseying low, "you are a real lady, and know how to speak to one like yourself."

Nan Darrell went to the King's Head ; but all Mrs. Arnold's endeavours to learn more of her history were baffled by the want of memory, and incoherence of insanity. She could not remember where little Kate had been born, or the exact day of her birth, though she declared she had the certificate of her own marriage ; the christening of the child, and some other papers hid safe away; adding, in a confidential and mysterious tone, "It would not do to let the overseers, and the magistrates have these things, they might send me to Bridewell ;" a threat so frequently held out in her various wanderings, that it ever stood forward in her thoughts. On two points she seemed clear and decided—that the child's father was dead ; and the child herself just turned of seven ; but of her late husband's connections she knew or would tell nothing ; breaking off a lament for his death to admire Mrs. Arnold's shawl, or point out

the beauty of her own wild attire, imitating as she did so the movements of a peacock when displaying its tail.

This dearth of information as to the child's family was the less regretted by Mrs. Arnold, as, having heard and seen much of the folly of educating children above their natural sphere, thus entailing misery upon them, she prudently resolved that little Kate should be fited for no higher station than lady's maid or housekeeper. She left money for poor crazy Nan, as the children called her, with Mrs. Binks, to lay out as she thought best; besides presenting her with a coloured handkerchief and some other trifles, the objects of her especial admiration. Little Kate, after taking an affectionate leave of Granny Wheeler, and promising to send her a great, big Bible, was drest in her best clothes; and the strange lady's carriage left the King's Head, at Cowford, late in the evening, amid the bows and courtesies, the stares and hurras of the simple villagers, who rarely saw so grand a lady, and whose approbation she had won by her kindness to the child.

CHAPTER II.

Le tems passe, mais l'amitié reste.

TIME flies! Nothing like originality even in a quotation! Time flies! Ten years have passed since little Kate, the ragged, dirty, ill-used, yet generally happy child, left Cowford with Mrs. Arnold, half laughing, half crying; one instant clinging to her protectress and smiling in her face, then looking from the window, clapping her hands with childish glee at the wondrous speed with which the trees, the hedgerows, and the houses, galloped past.

Children certainly are not philosophers, however wise they may be in their own conceit; but then they are happy! And what is the aim of the philosophy of our later years, but to win back, though with much toil, only a semblance it may be, of that happiness involuntary in our childhood? You tell the child that not a hill, a hedgerow, or a house, is moving on:—she may not say that she does not believe you—but how can she? Does not she see the hills, the hedgerows, and the houses, sweeping past? Time proves her error; but no future drive can vie in pleasure with her first.

We laugh at the folly of children:—are we grown up folks so very much the wiser? Do we never think that we alone are stationary, whilst all beside are moving on? That we alone—our hearts—our minds—our forms—have known no change, whilst all beside seem strangely altered?—or if we speak of change, is it more than a murmur of our lips? Do we feel it in our hearts? Then

it is so much more wonderful and exciting to see a chace between the many, than simply to pass on oneself, however swiftly, before the face of moveless things. To behold all nature starting forward in the race, hill after house, and forest after stream :—

"Nor farther may the forest and stream,
Nor nearer may the stream attain."

I, at least, can fully sympathise with little Kate's delight.

And what of little Kate, and her teaching of ten years?—just those years when every day

"Brings forth a marvel and a moral."

Has Mrs. Arnold kept her wise resolve, that Kate should be brought up according to her birth? Look at that slight and graceful figure pausing a moment ere she steps from the lawn into the well furnished drawing room to give one more look at the setting sun, one more glance at her favourite flowers. Mark the elegance of her attire, simple though it be; the unembarrassed grace with which she winds her way amid the various ornaments of the apartment: the half bounding and half stately step with which she treads the mossy carpet :—see her kneel beside that couch with the assured confidence of valued love—see her who reclines upon that couch, happy in her presence, part the rich ringlets from her brow, turning the curls through which run seeming threads of gold round her thin fingers ; then press her lips on that fair creature's cheek, murmuring the words, "dear Kate." Mark the respectful manner of the servant, the very same with Mrs. Arnold ten years since at Cowford, as the young lady gives an order. Listen to Mrs. Shaw, a rather stately personage of more than twelve years standing in her lady's service, as she asks Miss Darrell what dress should be left out for the morrow's journey. Is there no irony in her respect? no

deceit, or jealousy in her attentions? That lady on the couch, is it not the stranger of Cowford, though something changed by time? That young, bright creature, with her dark hazel eyes, that say such loving and such lovely things when turned on Mrs. Arnold, the expression of her features changing with her changeful thoughts;—is not that Kate Darrell? Little Kate?—the child of crazy Nan? It is!—the veriest dullard need not ask again has Mrs. Arnold kept her wise resolve. Let those condemn who have broken no resolves themselves! Are you curious, and would know how these things came to pass? There is little variety in the history of broken resolutions:—the hearts of all could tell the tale. We intend to be firm:—we do not change all at once:—we think, and we debate:—we yield inch by inch: we see our danger:—we hesitate:—but we have gone too far to retreat:—pride, vanity, and other foes are leagued against us,—we are conquered!

Mrs. Arnold was one of the most gentle, amiable, and unselfish of women; but she was deficient in energy and resolution; when she acted decidedly, which she occasionally did, it was from some generous impulse, not from the command of reason:—it is but rarely that we see firmness and gentleness united. An only child, and left an orphan early, all her best affections were centered in her husband and her Mary. The delicate health of herself and Mr. Arnold induced them to live a life of seclusion; so that when death deprived her of husband and child, she felt more desolate than she would otherwise have done. Her residence in Italy for the sake of the climate, at a time when a residence abroad was by no means as common as now, together with her previous retired life, had in a great measure estranged her from the friends of her youth: whilst the melancholy, and increased delicacy of frame, succeeding her loss, kept those aloof, who, from former recollections, esteem for her virtues, or a knowledge of her wealth without an acknowledged heir, might have induced to offer their services to dispel her grief. Resisting all endeavours to draw her into society, alleging that she

had neither health nor spirits for the exertion, even her existence was nearly forgotten beyond the immediate neighbourhood of Beechen Cliff, where she resided; rarely, very rarely, making short excursions to try the effect of change of air and scene. Mr. Arnold's only near relation being a nephew, sent to India at an early age to wean him from evil company and evil ways, he left the whole of his handsome property without restriction to his widow, considering young Millar to be already sufficiently provided for, judging by his worth.

Beechen Cliff was endeared to Mrs. Arnold, not so much from its beauty, as from its having been the birthplace of her husband—the scene of the happiness of their first married years:—and, still doting on his memory, she was rejoiced when young Millar returned from the East with a fair character and a pleasing wife. Soon after the adoption of little Kate they visited the widow, by invitation, and returned to India at the expiration of his leave of absence, loaded with presents, and in the hope, though not expressed, of being eventually her heirs. This could only be conjecture, for though Mrs. Arnold was known to have made her will during Mr. Millar's residence in England, so well did she and her solicitor keep their own councils, that nothing certain could be asserted on the point. The Millars were again expected in England; and Mrs. Arnold expressed pleasure at the prospect of their meeting.

It had been the intention of her protectress to spare Nan Darrell's child the misery attending an education superior to the pupil's natural station in society; and really little Kate herself must bear the blame if things chanced otherwise. She was so sweet tempered, so docile, so endearing; so quick to learn, so grateful to her teacher; and withal possessing a gaiety so inspiriting, and so bewitching, that every body liked to teach, play with, and caress her; and she liked to be taught, played with, and caressed by everybody, from the footman, who fed her guinea-pigs; the gardener, who made her a tiny garden, all for herself; the keeper, who brought her young birds and hares to nurse and tame; the house-

keeper, who instructed her in the mysteries of pastry and preserves; the stately Mrs. Shaw, who lectured her on morals, and the use of the needle; the coachman, who taught her to ride ;—from everybody, up to dear, dear Mamma Arnold herself, who, having no one beside her whom she could hope to induce to take an interest in her favourite authors and pursuits, was at last startled by the conviction, forced upon her, that unconsciously, and unintentionally, she had obeyed mad Nan's injunctions, and formed the child a lady like herself, with all the grace, the knowledge, and accomplishments of a refined, well educated woman. Startled at this conviction she paused to consider:—it was too late for debate, the point was decided—the evil completed. She had allowed the natural fascinations of the child, increased by her daily increasing intelligence and devoted love to her benefactress, to win so completely on her affection, that she was never so happy as when she was near; always felt some wish ungratified when she was absent. She watched her graceful movements,—she listened to her remarks—she saw her taste for the beautiful and the refined, a taste she had herself inspired;—and she felt that to condemn her now to the drudgery of servitude —a communion with those so opposed in thoughts and habits—would be a far greater cruelty than she had already committed, in giving her an education superior to her birth.

The tastes she had inspired she was bound in love and justice to provide her the means of gratifying: it would be the act of a barbarian to condemn her to become a mental Tantalus, ever pining for that beyond her reach. Her love would not have permitted this, had not her justice forbade it: having gone so far, she must go still farther; and with the feelings, manners, and education of a gentlewoman, give also the means to support the station.

Every obstacle to her wish of saving her adopted child from any future pain, which her plan of education might occasion, seemed overcome by the death of Nan, some time after the removal of little Kate from Cowford,

of which Mrs. Binks had given due information to Mrs. Arnold. The body of the poor crazy creature had been found in the river; the features bruised and disfigured by the action of a violent flood, but still the identity perfect.

Now, then, Kate Darrel stood alone;—with no connections of low and vulgar habits to whom duty might compel attentions painful to a refined and delicate mind.

Gradually Kate's happy face peeped less often into the housekeeper's room, the pantry, and the court, though it was still always welcome;—gradually the domestics, though equally attached, ceased to call her little Kate:—it grew to be Miss Kate—Miss Katharine, and, at last, Miss Darrel;—and all this without any order from Mrs. Arnold, or any assumption on her own part, being only the natural effect of her increasing age and elegance of manner. That no jealousy was felt towards the favourite spoke well for all.

Mrs. Banham, a friend of Mrs. Arnold's before her marriage, was one of the very few with whom she had kept up any intercourse, an intercourse restricted to occasional letters for the last twelve years, principally owing to Mrs. Banham's having been abroad during the greater part of that period, first from her husband's holding some official situation, and latterly for the purpose of completing the education of her daughters. It was to her house that Mrs. Arnold and her adopted child were to proceed on the following day; the former having at length yielded to her old friends pressing invitation; but not without many nervous misgivings. However she might of late have overlooked any pain that could accrue to her young favourite from her lowly birth, now that her *protegée* was to mingle for the first time with persons of her own tastes, and manners, though her superiors in station, she could not but feel a little anxious, loving Kate as she did, lest she should suffer annoyances and embarrassments from which all her care would be unable to preserve her: nay, naturally elegant as was her demeanour in general, for all about Kate Darrel was natural and elegant, she felt something

like a dread of her first appearance in society, lest, unaccustomed to strangers, she should exhibit the awkwardness which might be expected from her descent. Another embarrassing consideration was, that for once in her life she had shown a want of candour to her friend. If she had told the truth, she had not told the whole truth :—she had simply spoken of her favourite as an orphan whom she had adopted, and to whom she was much attached. Her former knowledge of the world suggested this concealment ; but she could not quite reconcile herself to what she considered as little short of deception, and she felt some dread lest the whole truth should be revealed through the tattling of her servants, or the openness of Kate herself, who, knowing nothing of that world she dreaded, never dreamt of concealing hope, feeling, thought, or circumstance, unless particularly requested to do the latter, for little Kate could keep a secret, half girl, half woman, as she was. A woman in her intellect and its development ;—a child, a loving and confiding child in her affections, and sometimes in her manner.

From her first fear she was relieved by the rather formal, but worthy lady's maid, who after a due quantity of bridling and an undue quantity of preface, gave her mistress to understand that she, and the housekeeper, and the footman, or more properly the butler, to say nothing of the coachman, the cook, and the scullion, had decided it would be as well now that Miss Darrell was grown up, and her mother dead, not to mention what sort of a person that dead mother had been. "It might prevent some young gentlemen from coming forward ;—and Miss Darrell would be a blessing to any one."

Mrs. Arnold coloured whilst she applauded the kind decision of Mrs. Shaw and her friends, adding, however, that should the question arise of Miss Darrell's marriage, she should consider it a duty to mention every particular. It now only remained to give a hint for silence to her *protegée*, grounding that hint upon some generous

motive, not to sully her young mind with the shadow of deception : or, to use the words of Mrs. Shaw, 'the dread of deterring some young gentlemen from coming forward.'

"Where has my little Kate been roaming?" asked Mrs. Arnold of the lovely creature kneeling at her feet, putting back the curls that nearly hid her glowing cheek, that cheek no longer showing the sun-burnt hue of early days, but clear and life like ; and if not boasting the dazzling fairness of a blonde, possessing the still greater charm of

"Changing with each changing thought."

"Where have I been, dear mamma? where should I have been, but all round and about, and here, and there, and everywhere ? Did you think I was gone too long?"

"You wish me to say yes, but I will not flatter you. Where is your here, and there, and everywhere?" replied Mrs. Arnold, looking with delight at her gentle gaiety, that in its greatest exuberance was never overpowering.

"Oh, mamma! I thought only little girls were curious. I suppose I must tell you though, or dear, kind, lecturing Shaw will put me in the corner. Well, then !—I went down to the school, and Goody Harman's, and Goody Blanchard's, and ever so many other Goodies, just to say good bye, and hope they would all be well, they, and their children, and grandchildren, when we came back."

"Pretty well all the village I suspect you visited, Kate."

"How clever you are, mamma ! And can you guess all the kind and grateful things they said of you, too ? But you cannot. I love them all, for they love you, nearly,—no—not quite nearly, as much as I love you !" said the grateful girl, throwing her arms round the neck of her benefactress.

"Go on with your confession, you little flatterer; and never mind what the Goodies said, or I shall really put you in the corner," said Mrs. Arnold, gently putting down the encircling arms.

"I first went to the top of the hill, and it was all so beautiful around;—the sun setting in such splendour—the air so fragrant, so refreshing, that I was sorry we were going away to-morrow. Will Sallowfield be half as pretty!"

"Simple child! you cannot love—you idolize. There are a thousand homes more beautiful than Beechen Cliff—millions more worthy love than Mrs. Arnold."

"No! No! No!" said little Kate, with loving warmth.

"Take heed that you do not love the things of earth too much: they may be taken from you; and then that earth will seem but as a desert."

"But you—how can I love you too much? You, to whom I owe all, every thing?" exclaimed the grateful girl, unwilling to be stinted in her love.

"You rate my care too highly, Kate; there has been selfishness in my affection. My heart was desolate; and you have made it bloom again. I had no tie to earth—and you have bound me to this life again with chains of love; you have been to me as a dear child."

"Thank you! thank you! my own dear mother, these are the sweetest words I ever heard;—they will be with me till my dying day. I feared I had been wayward, and had not loved you as I should."

"Not loved me as you should? Why, you have always touched upon idolatry—but you must be more sober in your speech, dear Kate, now that you will have other hearers."

"No! No! I would have all the world know what I owe you."

"But I do not desire this; and I am sure you would not pain;—yes, pain me, Kate. I am in earnest. If you really love me, you will only say you were an orphan; and that I took you to my home and heart."

"If I love you? Can you doubt it? I thought you said I had been to you as a dear child."

"I did ; and it is on that love I reckon for compliance with my wishes; my child will never speak, when I request her to be silent ;" replied Mrs. Arnold, kissing away the tears of the grateful Kate.

"I will be silent—quite silent—if you wish it; but I so love to tell——"

"Just what I wish untold ; you make me play the baby like yourself, and look as much a simpleton. It would be better to be silent at all times in delicacy to your mother, whom of course you cannot recollect.

"I think I recollect an odd looking little person with eyes so bright they frightened me ; but I am sure I remember dear Granny Wheeler to whom you were so kind until her death, and all for me."

"That is enough, Kate ; no more praise but heed my wish;—and now tell me more of your long ramble. I would wager this diamond ring that you had a look at all your untalking pets, and a confab with your talking ones. A long gossip with the keeper and the gardener, I doubt not."

"Yes, yes ; you knew there was no risk in wagering your ring, for they do love a long talk, and could not let me go without one. They say it will be so dull and unked when we are gone; and we shall not be as happy anywhere else; and the gardener tells me I shall lose the blowing of the prettiest flowers, and he has got some new ones just to please me—and I so love all flowers!"

"I know you do Kate, next to me. So now you are sorry that you are going ; you who sometimes wish to traverse earth and sea."

"Not exactly sorry, only not quite so glad :—I fear my pets will miss me."

"Again, Kate, I give you warning—your love approaches to idolatry!"

"No, not idolatry. I must love those who love me; and all love little Kate," said the graceful girl, throwing her arms round Mrs. Arnold, and stopping all reply with kisses.

"And yet the time may come when all that charms you now may cease to please; and still the change be not with them, but you."

"Mamma! Impossible!"

CHAPTER III.

I saw her ere regret had thrown
  Its shadow o'er her lightness;
As yet her heart no grief had known,
  Her spirit liv'd in brightness.
Her sweet smile held all minds in thrall,
  Her greatest spell was ever,
That heart was in, and over all—
  She could be worldling never.

We will not give an account of the journey, nor of little Kate's wonder and delight, the wonder and delight of an intelligent, animated girl of seventeen, leaving her home for the first time, and blessed with that happy disposition which in all things,

"Finds, or makes a pleasure."

We passed over ten years without giving even one hint on education ;—we will now pass over three days without lecturing on scenery. We were ever merciful.

On the fourth day Mrs. Arnold and her young favourite entered Mrs. Banham's dressing-room, who gave them a friendly welcome, words and manner so *empressé*, (I really cannot remember any English word which will convey my meaning ;) that Katharine yielded her heart at once ; and Mrs. Arnold blushed at her nervous fears, lest the friend of her childhood should have grown cold and worldly. The two young ladies, fine, stylish looking girls, rather older than they desired to be thought, had much of their mother's manner ; but

some think they could discover in the eldest traces of study and design ; whilst a suspicion might arise that the youngest in her desire to attract, would scarcely scruple to enact the coquette. Mr. Banham was a prudent man of middling intellect, silent from principle, still more than inclination ; always afraid of saying or doing too much. Mr. George Banham was rather a genteel looking youth, who having no character of his own, was inclined to borrow one from those lauded by others, that is as much as was in his power ; changing his models with the public voice. His definition of character was dress and address.

Mrs. Banham was universally liked—Mr. Banham universally respected—the young ladies pronounced clever, stylish, amiable, and accomplished, a verdict not to be set aside by the murmurs of some poor rejected suitors ; to whom it would have been cruel to deny the right of complaint. The house was very pleasant ; every thing well appointed ; and generally, as at present, filled with visitors, to Mrs. Arnold's annoyance, who had expected to meet only a family circle.

General introductions not being the fashion, we will leave the temporary inhabitants of Sallowfield to introduce themselves as they take part in conversation, with only an occasional word or two of explanation.

The young ladies carried off Miss Darrell for a walk, in which they were joined by other beaux and belles, whilst Mrs. Banham and her visitor passed the remainder of the morning in talking over olden times.

Mrs. Arnold's scarcely admitted fears that her favourite, unused to society, would exhibit awkwardness and embarrassment on her first mingling with strangers, were dispelled before the close of the day. No hope of attracting admiration had ever been held out to her as an inducement to pursue any particular line of conduct ; but all her actions flowed from the prompting of a gay and kindly heart ; thus she was always natural—always the same ; aping no manner—descending to no deceit. She met every kindness with gratitude, as being above her merits ; looked on all things through the medium of

her own happiness, never dreaming of envy, or ill will ; still less suspecting the admiration that her grace, her animation, and her sunny temper was compelling, even from those the least inclined to entertain the feeling.

Another misgiving, too, of Mrs. Arnold's was happily allayed. Now that little Kate, as she still sometimes called her, was to come in contact with the conventional quietude of good society, she could not but fear that her favourite's *naïve*, confiding and caressing manner, so enchanting in seclusion, so attaching to those towards whom it was displayed, would be startling, nay, almost ridiculous, in the eyes of those in whom a commerce with mankind had enforced a more cautious and sober demeanour. Great, therefore, was her delight in seeing that whilst towards herself little Kate retained her child-like and caressing manner, an instinctive feeling of propriety taught her to exhibit towards others a more staid and womanly conduct. Her gaiety was gentle, never boisterous, or over-powering ; and respect mingled with the admiration excited by her fascinating playfulness. Romp, flirt, or coquette, she was not—it was impossible to believe that she ever could be ; but the most natural, grateful, warm-hearted, and attaching of human beings, with the errors of humanity not as yet developed by acts, from the absence of temptation.

"What a lovely creature Miss Darrell is!" remarked Mrs. Banham to her old friend: "I wonder you have been allowed to retain her so entirely. Has she no relations anxious to claim such a treasure?"

"No near relations: her parents have been dead some years ; and she was an only child," replied Mrs. Arnold, with some slight embarrassment at concealing the whole truth, though still more confirmed in her intention of silence towards the world in general by a late conversation on the subject of low birth.

Mrs. Banham marked the embarrassment ; but did not interpret it correctly.

"Poor child ! yet I should not say so, when you have been so kind a mother to her."

"I have endeavoured to supply a parent's place ; and

love her as a child," replied Mrs. Arnold, without the slightest idea of Mrs. Banham's suspicions.

"Very kind—like yourself, Eliza: you at least are unchanged by time. For myself, I think there is too much said about birth, when a girl has elegant manners, a refined mind, and no vulgar relations to annoy her. The only thing is, delicate tastes and expensive habits require the means of gratifying them. I have seen much misery brought on a poor girl where this has not been thought of; it is like taming a bird; accustoming it to an abundance of dainty food which it cannot procure for itself; and then turning it out to pine and starve amid the mocking of its fellows."

"Kate shall be well provided for," remarked Mrs. Arnold, with emotion, turning pale at the thought of such a fate for her darling.

"I am not jealous for my daughters," continued Mrs. Banham; "they are no great beauties, and must take their chance of pleasing: but if I were, I should be tempted to wish your adopted child with the hosts of evil spirits at the bottom of the Red Sea. How all the gentlemen are collected around her! As for George, his heart is gone already, though considered rather fastidious. Must I warn him that Miss Darrell has no heart to give, or may he woo, and wear if he can win?"

"Kate has no engagement, and shall decide for herself; but she is full young to think of these things, and you must not put such fancies into her head. She is half a girl still, and has scarcely seen more men than the gentle Miranda."

"Never fear! I will not put such fancies into her head; but what George may do, since he has your permission, I really cannot say. Young men do not mind their mothers now as they used to do in our earlier days; besides, I hold with you, that there should be no interference in these matters and detest manœuvering. It would be a fresh tie between us;—yet there is no need of this, I hope, Eliza."

"None! None! Sophia," said Mrs. Arnold, touched by her friend's appeal.

Mr. George Banham was, as his mother had hinted, making *les doux yeux* at the animated Katharine, who, with Miss Banham, formed the centre of a circle of admiring gentlemen, moved to this endeavour to make himself agreeable by the example of Sir Herbert Eustace, a lively young Baronet, with an unincumbered estate in the neighbourhood of ten thousand a year, who, fascinated by the witchery of her manner, had scarcely left her side since her first arrival. So perfectly unembarrassed by, because so perfectly unconscious of, this admiration, was Kate Darrell, that she smiled and answered, now gaily, and now gravely, with ever changing expression, just as naturally as she would have answered the old gardener, exciting by her self possession the wonder of those who knew the seclusion in which she had been reared.

"Positively it shall be so, Miss Darrell," exclaimed the lively Baronet, who, having some time been the *cynosure* of all the manœuvering elders in the neighbourhood, was never troubled with *mauvaise honte*, aware that what he said or did was sure of meeting approbation. "Positively, Miss Darrell, you must ride over to Eustace Park to-morrow, lest I should be suddenly summoned to the North, as I expect. You shall see wonders upon wonders; your own wonder the greatest marvel of the whole. I have not met with so delightful a person as yourself since my introduction to Punch, which I always count an epoch in my life; my acquaintance with you I consider epoch the second. I pique myself on my penetration, and am thoroughly convinced that you will be the very princess of sight seers; beholding all that you ought to behold; believing all that you ought to believe."

"Even to the very stone griffin, that spreads his wings when you appear; and the knight and his lady-love who descend from their picture to dance a galliard in the hall at the full of the moon, as you have so kindly informed me?" replied the laughing Katharine. "I own my simplicity, Sir Herbert, and my wish to oblige you in return for all the pretty tales that you have been

telling me, but I am afraid I shall not see and believe all you desire."

"You think not? Well, we are at issue, then; for I am thoroughly convinced you will; you wonder more naturally and beautifully than any one I know. I would I were some strange monster to be the object of your wonderment."

"Is it absolutely requisite that you should be so changed to make me wonder at you?" asked Katharine archly, yet so sweetly that he could not be offended.

"What!—you have wondered at me as I am? I thought as much:—you have wondered at my eloquence, whilst relating the honours of my family; and I am repaid. It is not every one who can relate—it requires some genius; but then, neither is it every one who can or will open such eyes with such a very bewitching mingling of doubt, marvel and belief. You will always be a unique, Miss Darrell."

"Few ladies would thank you for such a prediction," growled out Mr. Bell, an old bachelor, and universal satirist and grumbler.

"So you are there, sir; come to quarrel with all my pretty sayings to my face;—and repeat them as your own behind my back. Forbid it gallantry that I should not submit to the vagaries of a belle. But once more, Miss Darrell, when are we to start? to-morrow? Go you must."

"Indeed, Sir Herbert, I cannot go to-morrow."

"Indeed, Miss Darrell, you must. Remember,

'Un plaisir differé est un plaisir perdu.'

You still look thwartingly. Now am I thoroughly convinced that a phrenologist would report your organs to be marvellously inharmonious. He would prove beyond the power of combativeness to dispute, that with you firmness had degenerated into obstinacy; whilst wonder had become incredibly large and active from the habit of marvelling at your perfectly unfeminine desire of having your own way."

"No: it has grown so large, on the instant, wondering at your rudeness. First you compare me to Punch, at whom I believe every one laughs: then to a creature unlike any of its kind—a before unheard of monster—one who wishes for her own way ;—and now you are accusing me of obstinacy, and lecturing on phrenology, when I heard you say, not many hours since, that you never talked learnedly but to those whom you disliked or despised. I am shocked; and shall go to dear Mrs. Arnold for protection before you compare me to any thing still more horrid."

"Then I follow to make my defence."

"I disdain to complain, leaving you rather to the punishment of your accusing conscience."

"What is all this about punishment and accusing conscience?" inquired Mrs. Arnold, as Katharine approached, followed by Sir Herbert, neither looking inclined to inflict punishment, nor dreading its infliction.

"Many and heavy charges against your daughter, Mrs. Arnold, demure and innocent as she is endeavouring to appear," replied the Baronet; "She disbelieves all the wonders that I have told her of Eustace Park, yet obstinately—I use the word advisedly—yet obstinately, refuses to judge for herself. I, who also discover strong symptoms of waywardness, and that rarest of all errors, the desire of having her own way;—strongly advise you on the score of morality and good government alone to insist on her riding over to Eustace Park to-morrow."

"What say you Kate in your defence?" asked Mrs. Arnold with a smile, not to be refused to the Baronet's good-natured gaiety.

"My dear Mrs. Arnold, do not think of hearing Miss Darrell in her defence. I know of no custom so greatly tending to the spread of immorality, as allowing an accused person to defend himself. In this most perfect world—among men, that world's most perfect work ; whom interest never sways, whom passion never rules —who would undertake the office of accuser but with

the deepest regret, and from the most conscientious motives? Of course, therefore, the accuser may ever be relied on; whilst to listen to the accused is to tempt one, who has already erred, to err again, and say the thing which is not, in the hope of escaping punishment. Never hear more than one side of the question, if you would not be puzzled how to decide."

"Your eloquence would be convincing to one less prejudiced, and attached to the old fashioned ways of my fathers; but the mighty schoolmaster has not yet visited my remote abode, so you must let me proceed in the old humdrum way; therefore, Kate, for your defence. Are you obstinate?"

"I hope not, mamma."

"Then why will you not go to Eustace Park to-morrow, as Sir Herbert wishes? He, at least, has no inordinate desire to have his own way—no man ever erred on that point—it is a feminine failing only."

"Ah, Mrs. Arnold! you have too much *esprit de corps*, to prove an impartial judge; but I shall not submit to be nonsuited without a struggle."

"No; you would traverse the world for a butterfly, yet not stoop to pick up the pearl at your feet; wasting your talents in a lady's drawing-room,—saying nothings to win the applause of fools, when you should be pleading in the cause of justice at the bar," remarked Mr. Bell.

"A bar to your further interruptions!" replied the Baronet, a touch of pettishness mingling with his gaiety.

Did he feel there was truth in the cynic's remark? There are some people who gain impunity for rudeness from perseverance, and such was the case with Mr. Bell: no one seriously quarrelled with him for his remarks; and he quarrelled with none for their replies.

"Come, Miss Darrell, you have not answered Mrs. Arnold's question. Why will you not go with me to Eustace Park to-morrow, when I have engaged to show you griffins who speak—women who are silent, and puppies with two tails?"

"Six, at the very least, Sir Herbert!" interrupted

Katharine, archly. "Such wondrous stories of animal sagacity I never heard before; and suspect I never shall again. The Hippogriffe of Italian romance—the dog of old Mother Hubbard, are as nothing to the animals of flesh and stone at Eustace Park."

"Fie, Miss Darrell! I am shocked at your exaggeration, to give it no harsher term. I only engaged to show you puppies with two tails; and neither heads nor hearts. I am a strict observer of truth, even to the most minute particular. A good story may please the unscrupulous, whose notions of morality are not very exalted; for my part, I only admire a plain downright fact without any embellishment. If I heard a child of lesser, or larger growth, assert that he had broken the near leg of a fly in the right hand side of a bay window, and knew that it had been the off leg of a fly, and had taken place in the left hand side of the window, I should make a point of correcting him, as Dr. Johnson says. Indeed, I perfectly agree with my highly respected friend, Mr. Bampton, who, unlike most, acts up to his opinion, that it is most unjustifiable and unwarrantable to tell a good story."

The shout of laughter which succeeded the Baronet's mock defence of plain matter-of-fact drowned the reply of the annoyed Mr. Bampton, of which only the first few words were audible.

"Really, Sir Herbert Eustace, this conduct is most unwarrantable, unjustifiable, and—"

"I perfectly agree with you," continued the incorrigible Baronet, "the telling a good story is unwarrantable and unjustifiable; and I know none more deserving of praise for their consistency than you, who not only set your face against it in others, but never fall into the error yourself. What if a man be a little prosy and digressive, better that, than embellish nature with a touch of art."

"Upon my word, Sir Herbert, I must be permitted to say that this conduct is most unwarrantable."

"Just so, sir; I knew you agreed with me," again interrupted his provoking tormentor. "It is quite

unwarrantable and unjustifiable that the lips should be employed in a prosy discussion, when the heart might rejoice in the beauty of poetry;—your expressions are inimitable! As you say, this turning away from the original subject is most discreditable, so answer to the plain question, Miss Darrell—why will you not go to Eustace Park to-morrow? Are you afraid of the dogs, the griffins, the grim portraits of my ancestors, or their living representative? For the last, I assure you, I am the most quiet, harmless, truth telling being in existence. Mr. Bampton will vouch for this. See—he is preparing to pronounce my eulogium: but my modesty will not permit me to allow its utterance, so speak at once, Miss Darrell—are you afraid of me?"

"Not in the least! you are so very quiet and harmless," replied the laughing Katharine.

"Then why will you not go? If you think the ride too long I will drive you and Miss Banham in my phæton."

"You are very kind, but I would rather not go to-morrow," said Katharine, a little embarrassed.

"But why not? Never acting without a good reason myself, I always require the same of another."

"Have you studied Mason on Self Knowledge?" growled out Mr. Bell.

"No, sir; but I will when you vouch from personal experience of the profit which may accrue from its perusal. Come, Miss Darrell, the reason."

Katharine coloured and hesitated.

"Do not tease the dear child," interposed Miss Banham, "depend upon it she has good reasons: she is a person to increase a favour by previous denial."

"I agree with you, Miss Banham," replied the Baronet rather emphatically! "I do not wish to tease you, Miss Darrell; so if you would rather not go, and rather not tell the reason why, I will not say another word, though I had set my heart on showing you the wonders of my ancient home."

"Thank you!" said Katharine, really grateful for

his forbearance, beginning to suspect that she had become an object of general observation. "I cannot go to-morrow, and would rather not tell the reason now, though I will some other time."

"Right, Miss Darrell ! do not by yielding admit the necessity of our sex assigning reasons for their actions," observed Miss Banham.

"Nay, Miss Banham ; I cannot permit the shadow of such a libel to rest on you.—When did you act without a reason or motive ?" remarked the Baronet, with seeming politeness.

The lady coloured slightly, but made no reply.

"I suspect I know the secret, Kate," said Mrs. Arnold. "You heard Shaw arrange a quiet drive for me to-morrow, and thought with her that I could not enjoy it in your absence."

The blushing Katharine admitted that she had judged correctly.

Sir Herbert looked more admiringly on her for her self denial, flattering himself that she had anticipated pleasure from the ride which he had proposed, whilst Mr. Bell muttered,—"It won't last ;" but more in sorrow than in sarcasm.

"So, Mrs. Arnold, you are the wicked fairy after all who thwarts my schemes. I will show my magnanimity by asking you to join the party. The road is excellent; and you shall have a poney carriage, or a donkey for the grounds ; or if really not equal to the fatigue, we will defer it, and you shall fix your own day ; but do let it be as soon as possible, for I may be called away, and I am dying to hear Miss Darrell wonder at and admire all my treasures."

"Then I fix to-morrow, Sir Herbert, in reward for your magnanimity ; but I will not tax your politeness to play civil to an old woman, though thanking you for your kindness. I saw Eustace Park some years ago, and have no doubt that Katharine's wonder and delight will satisfy even your exorbitant expectations. No remonstrance, dear Kate ; I wish you to go ; and really

can take a quiet drive without you to amuse me. But how are you to go?"

"I shall settle all that," replied Sir Herbert; "and see if I cannot have my own way for once. Depend on me for proper horses, chaperonage, &c. You look doubtful;—only entrust Miss Darrell to my care, and I will engage to guard her with the daring and devotion of a knight of the olden times."

"I think I may trust you;" said Mrs. Arnold.

"Indeed you may," he replied, with a touch of feeling.

"Do not be alarmed: George will take care of her;" remarked Mrs. Banham in a low tone; but not too low for the Baronet's quick ear, who fancied he heard an addition concerning his own taste for flirting with every new face.

"What do you think of Sallowfield and its inhabitants?" asked Mrs. Arnold of Katharine as they sat together that night in the former's dressing room.

"Sallowfield is very beautiful; and its inhabitants are very kind."

"Then you do not regret our coming?"

"No: but I shall not love Beechen Cliff the less; and shall return unchanged."

"You seemed friends with the young ladies at once. I have scarcely spoken to them myself; but I hear they are clever, amiable girls."

"I should be ungrateful not to like them, they are so kind; indeed, so is every one."

"Sir Herbert Eustace included?"

"Certainly: he is so considerate, so animated; and only laughs a little at my simplicity."

"And you do not mind his laughter?"

"No, he does it so good-naturedly."

"They call him very handsome," remarked Mrs. Arnold, anxious to learn more of the effect of his attentions, since her warning of his taste for flirting.

"So I heard Miss Charlotte Banham tell him, as I thought rather oddly."

"You are not of the general opinion, then?"

"I do not know. I thought at first only of his being so kind and amusing ; and now I am afraid I am very ungrateful, thinking much more of the wonders which he has promised to show me to-morrow than of himself."

Mrs. Arnold smiled to think how the Baronet's vanity might have been piqued at such a confession had he heard it, and changed the subject, satisfied that her single hearted favourite had borne her first trial of admiration without a feeling of self conceit ; or any other thought that might risk her future peace.

"Katharine Darrell is really attractive, in spite of her country manners and country education. Do you not think so, Sir Herbert?" said Miss Charlotte Banham, after the object of her remark had retired with Mrs. Arnold.

"In my opinion, Miss Darrell is attractive on account of what you call her country manners and country education, and not in spite of them. She has the spell of nature full upon her."

"You admiring nature and country manners ! I am amazed ! I thought you found fault with Miss White for the very same perfections but last week."

"The very reason why he should admire them this. You do not expect Sir Herbert Eustace to be two weeks together in the same mind?" growled out Mr. Bell.

"To be sure not, I am for variety ; and that is the reason why you and I can never agree. I never knew you pleased with any thing, or any body in my life ; you are always the same," replied the Baronet, whom the cynic rarely lost the opportunity of attacking ; and who, in return, rarely lost an opportunity of retorting.

"If sameness drew to sameness, as does like to like, we should be friends ; for if in me is the monotony of grumbling, on you I charge the monotony of trifling. When did wisdom mingle with or rule the conduct of Sir Herbert Eustace?"

"Now; when I decline a discussion with a cynic, who would gloom the *couleur de rose* of life."

"*Couleur de rose* of life!" muttered Mr. Bell. "Not an English term; and not an English feeling."

"Then all the young ladies desirous of winning the admiration of Sir Herbert Eustace must enact country maidens, performing rustic courtesies and rustic simplicity;" remarked Miss Charlotte Banham.

"All who would gain the esteem and lasting admiration of Sir Herbert Eustace must enact no character at all; but appear what nature made them. In the inartificial, manners take the tone of the mind, whether in town or country; let that be refined, and delicate, the heart warm and kind, and there can be neither awkwardness, vulgarity, nor rudeness."

"Sir Herbert Eustace turned grave lecturer!" observed Miss Banham, with her usual harmonious manner. "I agree with you; abruptness, boisterous gaiety, and all other sins against *les convenances*, prove the absence of that refinement and delicacy of mind which can alone produce perfect elegance."

"I suspect, Miss Banham, our agreement is scarcely as perfect as you pronounce. You more admire the elegance of art—I the elegance of nature:—you the mere elegance of manner, I rather the elegance of mind; and for *les convenances*, if you mean the critical frivolities of over refined idlers, I estimate far more highly one trait of kind and generous feeling."

"Where will you find it?" asked Mr. Bell sarcastically. "Yet it is a more sensible speech than most of yours," he added somewhat graciously.

"Hear! Hear! Hear! Mr. Bell, absolutely agrees with me! I crown myself with laurel after the fashion of Horace Walpole."

"A selfish, sensible egotist," muttered Mr. Bell.

"There is no difference in our opinions, Sir Herbert, I believe; only I am deficient in that clearness of definition, in which you excel," observed Miss Banham, with a flattering smile.

"I must feel honoured by the harmony in our opinions," replied the Baronet politely; but with a smile that the lady scarcely liked.

"Then you think Miss Darrell's country manner may pass in good society," said Miss Charlotte, who, whatever the world might say of her cleverness, sometimes showed a want of wisdom in pushing a question.

"I think Miss Darrell fited for the first society; not only the first in rank and fashion, but also in elegance and talent. Her's is the most fascinating manner I ever met with; fascinating from its being the manner of the heart, not the mere perfection of tuition."

"Indeed! Then I suppose I am in the wrong; and having been accustomed to a certain manner—the manner of the first circles—am apt to judge too critically. I fancied her animation a little *trop prononcé*—deficient in the harmony of high breeding. Perhaps you admire her features, too; I have been defending them against the criticism of the fastidious, who have been pulling them to pieces, one by one."

"I care little for the mere form of feature," replied the Baronet; "but the expression of those features is so varied, so beautiful in every variety, that he must be hypercritical who should say that her nose was too long, or her lip too short. I can think of her only as a sunbeam, in whose gladdening beauty one would wish to bask life away."

"I agree with Sir Herbert; her nose is not too long, or her lip too short; and she is so delightful!—not two minutes the same," observed Mr. George Banham, whose present fancy was to copy the Baronet.

Sir Herbert glanced at his stupid echo with some idea of retracting his praise, then contented himself with a mischievous smile.

"Now, Sir Herbert, do I feel prouder than I ever did before," said Miss Charlotte. "I once heard you say that you never praised one lady to another, but when you had a very high opinion of her to whom you spoke. I have tried in what estimation you hold me;—and am content."

"I am glad of it," replied the Baronet.

"Why, Eustace, what means this eulogium on Miss

Darrell ?" asked the friend he joined at the conclusion of the sentence. "I never heard you so poetical before."

"And probably never will again, unless I should chance to have an equal desire to give pleasure to the Misses Banham. I spoke for their especial gratification."

"I understand. I thought at first that you were going to enact Petruchio to this modern Katharine."

"No, no ; I must become steady before I become a Benedict, which Mr. Bell says will never be ; and some of his prophecies of evil must, in the common course of events, come true."

"Pray, is Miss Darrell to become Mrs. George Banham ?" asked Mrs. Bampton, who piqued herself on sincerity, and going to work, as she expressed herself, in a straightforward manner ; a line of conduct characterised by some as consisting in asking impertinent questions and making impertinent remarks.

"I have not quite made up my mind yet, though my mother wishes it ;" replied the young man, conceitedly.

"You had better decide quickly, or the lady's preference for the bloody hand may be too decided to be overcome."

"I am not afraid. Besides, Sir Herbert only flirts."

CHAPTER IV.

"The red leaf far more heavily,
Fell down to autumn earth,
Than her light feet—which seem'd to move
To music and to mirth.
With the light feet of early youth,
What hopes and joys depart!
Ah! nothing like the heavy step,
Betrays the heavy heart."

L. E. L.

"You have the darkest secret of my heart—
I love him not! though friends to all beside—to him
A foe!"

THE morrow came! a bright and sunny morrow—warm, but not too warm;—all freshness and all life:—just such a day as Sir Herbert would have chosen, had he possessed any influence with the sun, and been requested by the earth to bespeak a day for its benefit.

"Such a day! Miss Darrell, for seeing all the beautiful monstrosities of Eustace Park. I insist on your bringing back a most marvellous account of the wonders of my paternal home. To horse! To horse! good people; or there will be no time to see half the curiosities," exclaimed the Baronet, hurrying off some of the party to equip. "You seem a little anxious, Mrs. Arnold," he said, approaching that lady, who was looking out from the window on some of the horses leading about below. "You need be under no alarm, I can assure you; Miss Darrell's steed is nearly as gentle as herself; and I really

am neither Ogre nor wild man of the woods when young ladies are given to my care, whatever Messrs. Bell and Bampton may assert."

She looked steadily at him, but did not speak.

"If you really have any dread, Mrs. Arnold," he continued, misinterpreting her look, "I will change the arrangement; and Miss Darrell shall go in my phæton: I am a privileged person, not expected to account for my vagaries. Very odd, if a young Baronet with ten thousand a year may not have a fancy or so! But indeed you are timid without a cause; trust me, she will come back safe in life and limb."

"I fear neither for life nor limb," replied Mrs. Arnold, touched by a kind consideration which she had scarcely expected from his exuberant spirits and conduct to others; "but—"

"But what, Mrs. Arnold?"

"I will tell you, Sir Herbert, your kindness inducing me to be candid. Kate is young—very young:—knows nothing of the world:—she is an orphan, and having taken charge of her I feel peculiarly bound to watch over and to guard her. I have heard it hinted that Sir Herbert Eustace, like other young men, is inclined to flirt with every new face; and as he is a person whose slightest acts are marked, I should be sorry that my child's name were linked with his in a flirtation. Excuse my plainness;—my love for Katharine makes me anxious."

The Baronet looked into the face of the speaker to ascertain the possibility of scheming; but the placid countenance and pleading eye made him ashamed of the suspicion.

"All a libel, depend upon it, whoever told you; and I can guess:"—he replied, with a rather fuller colour. "I repeat; I am neither Ogre nor wild man of the woods; I flirt with none who do not by word or sign invite to the play; and Miss Darrell is not one of these. I thank you for your candour:—it is not misplaced—and my conduct shall be such as the most anxious mother should approve, for I too should be sorry to hear Miss Darrell made the subject of remark. I am wild and

thoughtless ;—selfish too, I fear ; but I have a heart, Mrs. Arnold," respectfully taking her hand, "though few like you know how to strike the cords to which it responds. Will you trust me ?"

"I will—I do," she replied, touched by his earnestness.

"Thank you. Miss Darrell shall be my care ; and I will do my *devoir* gallantly."

And he did do his *devoir* gallantly ; for though he rode by Katharine's side, pointing out the beauties of the scenery, for which purpose he had preferred the bridle road, his manner was so decidedly respectful, so kind and attentive ; and yet so far removed from any endeavour to draw her into what the most fastidious could denominate a flirtation ;—in short, so totally different from what it was to those young ladies who ought to attract his attention, that all felt the distinction ; and were checked in the remarks which they would otherwise have made on his being so constantly beside her. Another circumstance which preserved Katharine from unpleasant remark was, that the Baronet never sought a *tête-à-tête*, never addressed to her those apparently confidential observations, which might induce any to believe that he objected to the whole world hearing what he said ; in fine, he was acquitted by those who considered themselves competent to decide of enacting the flirt or the lover.

He looks upon her only as an interesting girl, decided most ; and this too after the acquaintance had been continued many days.

"You have been perfection hitherto, Miss Darrell ; seen all you should see, admired all you should admire ; but now comes the grand trial, for there is Eustace Park : and I intend to be very fastidious as to your praise," said the Baronet, as the fine old house rose into view before them, standing on a slight eminence, and backed by lofty woods. "Will you admire now as I could wish ?"

"Yes : were it only for your kindness. All are so kind to little Kate," she said, her bright eyes glistening as she spoke.

"It is quite a luxury to be kind to you ;—you are so grateful."

The Baronet spoke with feeling, rather than compliment; whilst the Misses Banham looked a little self conscious; and Mr. Bell growled out "Poor child! it will not last."

The house really was a fine old mansion, such as the most common-place must have liked; and the more enthusiastic might have doted on. The place was well kept up; and the grounds which were of considerable extent and beauty, showed taste in their first arrangement, and care in their subsequent order.

Katharine was delighted, and delighted others with the open warmth of her admiration. In spite of the incumbrance of a habit, she flitted about with the wild grace of childhood; or, as the old gardener said, (there were many old servants at Eustace Park,) "just like a young bird, hovering over one flower, then over another; its little wings quivering with joy."

"There, Miss Darrell! do you hear? The gardener says you are like a young bird."

"A chattering, mischievous, little tom-tit, is that it, Sir Herbert? And will he shoot me if I pick this strawberry? It is such a fine one; and dear mamma is so very fond of strawberries."

"Shoot you, Miss? Lord love ye, no. I would not hurt you for anything—you look so pretty; and so happy, skipping about from one bed to the other, and praising all the flowers, as thof you loved them; not like some ladies that walks about grave and stiff, as if it warn't fit for ladies to laugh, or admire nothing but ladies like themselves. It does one's heart good to look at ye, and hear ye laugh: it sounds so sweet and so happy; just like the birds on a summer day. I'll pick you a beautiful nosegay, as Sir Herbert bade me, for you deserves flowers; and looks prettier than any here."

"There, Miss Darrell! heard you ever the like? You bewitch all who see you," observed the laughing Baronet. "I never heard Sanderson so eloquent before; and you must be a prodigious favourite, for he is

cutting you all the best flowers in the garden : yet he sometimes grumbles if I pick only one."

"Not if you keeps it yourself, Sir Herbert ; but I do grudge to see you pick the pretty roses, that knows no deceit, to give them to fine ladies who don't care a bit for the flowers only because you are a rich, handsome bachelor. This young Miss ain't one of them ; she likes the flowers for themselves ; and I really do think the roses looks prettier when she goes anigh'st them."

"There can be no doubt of that," replied the highly amused Baronet, with whom the old gardener was a privileged person. "But you must not libel the other ladies to do honour to Miss Darrell."

"I says no more than the truth, sir ; and you knows that as well as I do. Never you marry one as is ashamed to laugh and cry, as God meant she should. Your good father, bless his noble heart ! used to tell me to take care of you when you was a little fellow ; and a right mischievous little chap you was; and so I warns you now, don't you go for to give me a mistress that crawls along like a beetle over a gravel path ; or a peacock spreading out its tail to be looked at :—it would break my heart—and it would break your's too," said the old man, earnestly. "But there you sees more nor people thinks ;" with a sly wink at his young master.

"I see charms in all the sex, though I thank you for your advice," replied the Baronet, gaily. "Time enough to consider : I am too wild to think of matrimony for some years to come."

"To be sure you be quite like a boy still sometimes ; but it is a noble heart you have ; and your lady will be a happy woman be she who she may. A good master makes a good husband ;—and a good master you have been to all," drawing the sleeve across his eyes as he spoke, whilst the Baronet bent for a moment over a flower, and then set off down a green alley, calling on the ladies to follow him to the grotto.

Sir Herbert had indeed ever been a kind master; and his gaiety, good temper, and generous disposition, had endeared him to all his dependants.

"A kind master!" growled out Mr. Bell; "ay, so he may be: he has enough to give—he likes to be happy himself and see others happy :—it is his nature :—but there is no self-denial in this:—it is only a more refined and generous selfishness. The world does not know what it lauds."

If Katharine's delight had enchanted the gardener, it did not the less win the old house-keeper, on whom the Baronet called to do the honours of the house, aware that she would be still more pleased than himself in listening to the raptures of the happy girl.

"Come, Mrs. Hilton, you must assist me in showing the house and its wonders to this young lady; she deserves the honour, for she admires Eustace Park as you and I do; I always forget the stories about the old pictures and the armour."

"La, Sir Herbert! you make new ones every day: and I stare and wonder what is true and what is not; you look so grave all the time."

"Fie, Mrs. Hilton! to hint at my saying what is not."

"I am so glad that other people are puzzled," observed the laughing Katharine; "I thought it was only I who was so simple. I will believe nothing but what you say is true, Mrs. Hilton."

"You are very good, ma'am; but Sir Herbert would not really tell a falsehood for the world; or say anything to hurt any one: it is only his funning."

"Death to some, while sport to him!" growled Mr. Bell, who, as though to annoy the Baronet, persisting in keeping beside him.

"That is, Mrs. Hilton, you mean to say that I am a piece of perfection, though I used to bewilder you sometimes with my strange tales, and make sad havoc among the cakes and sweetmeats. Of the former penchant I am completely cured as all may hear; but the latter remains in full force, as I proved by the destruction committed on the magnificent luncheon you provided, though at so short a notice."

"I did my best, Sir Herbert."

"You did well :—it was perfect in my eyes ;" said the Baronet, kindly. "I hope you have the same tastes as myself, Miss Darrell ?"

"For what, Sir Herbert ? For telling strange tales ? or for making sad havoc among the cakes and sweetmeats ?" asked Katharine, archly.

"Oh, for the latter only. Have you not had assurance that I no longer practice the former ?"

"Then our tastes are alike. For cakes and sweetmeats, I am little Kate still, as I have just given proof : indeed I am afraid I am little Kate still in other things. Let me be the child for the rest of the morning, and you shall see how well I will play the woman in the evening."

"Do not get rid of this happy, child-like simplicity and gaiety ; you would resemble other people then ; now you are the most bewitching little bird, as the old gardener says, that eyes ever rested on. Womanhood will come quite soon enough, with its cares, and its fears, and its dignities."

"Quite soon enough! too soon!" remarked Mr. Bell, but in a tone so much softer than usual, that the Baronet turned quickly, looking at him in surprise.

"There! even the sober, the far-seeing Mr. Bell, confirms my warning ; so come with me, and play the child among the monsters of the olden time, as you declare you have among the sweets, of which, however, I saw no symptoms. My other guests having seen the wonders, prefer almonds to armour ; pastry to pictures ; and promise to pardon my devoting myself to your amusement : so come with me, for our space is brief."

Katharine gladly followed, and, to her surprise, Mr. Bell did the like. Sir Herbert would willingly have dispensed with his presence ; but was too polite to say so, and really Mr. Bell enacted the cynic in a much more amiable style than was his wont. Perhaps, though he might not have allowed it, Katharine's gaiety had won upon him, impracticable as he was deemed ; certainly the lively girl appeared to regard him kindly ; and not to stand in such awe of him as others did.

Cynic and grumbler as he was, could he too feel a pleasure in her innocent sportiveness! Who could meet her eyes gleaming with delight,—mark her bounding step—listen to her silver tones, as she gave words to her raptures,—and not be moved? There was such force, such freshness, such an outpouring of her own happy nature in her delight. How could any look on her, and believe that she could become the prey of sorrow or of evil? She knew no grief, no care:—loved all she looked on—believed that all loved her. Her happiness was in its spring:—a rich and beautiful spring;—not even one blighted leaf to tell of the future winter of the mind. The fuller glow of summer might succeed; but an autumn and a winter, that heart could never know:—its beautiful gratitude, its unselfish love, could know no fading and no blighting.

Alas! the storm and the canker-worm prey on the beautiful as on the loathsome; and its loveliest tints will fade by time alone, even without the aid of tempest or of worm.

Yet there are some whose hearts can know no winter: who even at the frosty time of threescore years and ten can feel and love as in their youth. What are the treasures of the world to the rich affection of such a heart?

Katharine's almost rapturous delight at the lofty corridors, the old armour, the waving banners, and the family portraits, each with its old legend, was expressed so warmly and so *naïvely*, that few heard her without involuntarily sharing in her feeling for the instant, though the next they might be smiling at her and at themselves. In her, wonder and admiration were in their full power; their edge had not been dulled by satiety.

Certainly the legends were the most amusing ever told by mortal lips; some heroic, some comic, as related by the Baronet, to the scandal of poor Mrs. Hilton, whose affection for her young master could not prevent an occasional shake of the head, and hinted doubt of their veracity.

"And whose portrait is that!" asked the animated

sight seer, standing before one more modern than any which she had yet remarked, hanging in a good light in the Baronet's own study. "And do tell me only the truth, if you please, as I am much taken with its noble expression."

"I will not quarrel with your request, though on this occasion it was needless. That is the portrait of my father—I cannot jest on him."

Katharine looked at it for a few moments without further question: and then passed on to the next.

"And whose is this? the same in feature, but different in expression."

"That is my uncle;—my father's elder brother, who with singular good-nature, having made himself unpopular, departed for the East, where he was killed in a quarrel with a native, though his death is not quite as well authenticated as would have been the case had he died in England, and been honoured with a Coroner's Inquest. However, the point was too well ascertained before my grandfather's death for me even in my dreams to tremble at his return, which would be by no means agreeable, he not being the most amiable person in the world, or holding much affection towards my noble father who was his antipodes. Unless age should have changed him, and he would now be nearly seventy, I might expect no favour at his hands; and I have no particular fancy to give up wealth and title. A rich young Baronet has a tolerable time of it; besides I really love the fine old place, with its beauties and vagaries, the latter even hallowed in my eyes, however I may occasionally shock Mrs. Hilton by inventing new stories instead of relating old ones. With all due respect for my uncle John, I do not desire his presence at Eustace Park."

"I wish he would come; it might be the saving of you!" observed Mr. Bell, abruptly.

"I thank you for your good wishes, which I duly appreciate;" replied the Baronet, bowing low.

"You neither thank me for my good wishes, nor appreciate them;" said Mr. Bell, with bitterness. "You

think me a discontented, querulous old grumbler: but I repeat, I would that your uncle could return, and strip you of your wealth and title; you might then become a useful member of society and an honour to your name. As it is, you are a popinjay—a grown up child seeking only amusement;—one who thinks himself privileged to make every speech a lie, because those lies are to raise a laugh, not make a fortune. Poor vanity! to become the laughing-stock of fools—the acknowledged jester of the county! Your only chance of being torn from this Vanity Fair is being compelled to work for your livelihood."

"I am amazed, Mr. Bell, that you who pique yourself on never interfering in other people's concerns, and hold giving advice the act of a fool or a madman, should needlessly trouble yourself with my welfare; making me the exception to your rule of non-interference. It is beyond me to fathom the reason for this consideration."

"I will tell you, young man. I knew your father and respected him; almost the only man I ever did respect."

"So, because you respected the father, you force your counsel on the son; taking every opportunity to condemn and annoy him."

The young man spoke warmly; but added, almost immediately in a milder tone—"For that father's sake I overlook it; but I have no inclination to turn digger, miner, or trader."

"And what are young men without professions? Buzzing drones!"

"I will not irritate you, sir; and ask what are old men soured by disappointment?—but rather change the subject, denying your right to take me to task. My father, whom you say you respected, had no profession."

"But your father, whom I did respect, was useful to his kind;—a liberal and active magistrate—a judicious landlord—a considerate, but observing master. He did not leave all to his steward and attorney, whilst he was dancing after flirts, or making coxcombs laugh."

"You shall look over my accounts yourself, sir, if that will please you; and for the Bench, I will take my seat when I have become wise enough and grave enough."

"Wise and grave! And how can you become this when your days are spent in idleness and folly? Is wisdom to come by the mere writing yourself magistrate, as some seem to think? Why not seek an acquaintance with the laws of the land?"

"Bless me, sir, there is no satisfying you. You require more than the laws of the land themselves: they only insist on your possessing so many hundreds a year, and the favour of the Lord Lieutenant—no particular wisdom or knowledge. Besides, am I not a barrister?"

"You a barrister! In how many causes have you been employed?"

The speaker's scornful laugh was no slight trial to the Baronet's temper. The colour rose to his brow, but his eye fell on his father's picture, then encountered Katharine's kindly look, and he answered gaily:—

"Shame upon you, Mr. Bell, for this scandal on my legal powers. I have slept the right number of nights—I have paid the right sum of money—I have eaten the right number of dinners; and what would you more? The last alone is sufficient to establish my merits in eating England. Nothing can be done without a dinner—all things with one. A man is rated now—not by his worth—we have long ceased to be savages; not by his thousands, the rate so long maintained: not by his rank—nobility is out of favour:—but by the number of the dinners which he has eaten, and others paid for. Having popular manners and tolerable powers of digestion, I look to being Chancellor in time."

"You will be nothing—or worse than nothing if not compelled to exertion. A frivolous jester! the county fool!"—growled Mr. Bell.

"Generally the wisest man of the company, so I will not take offence at the title. I cannot help wondering with your universal philanthropy, that you should be so partial in your favour, wasting more counsel upon me than any other fifty, be they who they may: though

I give you sorry encouragement, neither mending nor being grateful."

"True! most true!"

"Well then, sir, let the only wise man in the world for once take the advice of the only fool in the county, and cease to waste his wisdom on the ungrateful and incorrigible. If I must submit to rebuke, I own I would have it garnished with kindly looks and gentle words. Like the Egyptian Queen, I would have the venomed asp of blame concealed in flowers."

"Psha! only children wish the nauseous draught to be disguised,—men drink it as it comes."

"Then am I no man: and I pray you for the future to consider me a child—a very little child; and make my mind's medicine the more palatable."

"I am on a par with yourself in wisdom, not to let you run your course unheeded," said Mr. Bell in anger, turning from him as he spoke.

The Baronet laughed; but not his usual happy laugh, for the strictures of his morose reprover always vexed him.

"Now, Miss Darrell, to show off the remaining lions. Mr. Bell has the power of putting me out of humour more than any one I know; he is as a funeral bell, always making me sad and dull. Let us turn away from my uncle John, too; I like him now less than ever; indeed neither this nor its pendant should remain in my own peculiar den, but that the arrangement was my father's; and therefore I do not change it."

"And why do you not like this picture?" asked Katharine, "I like it very much. One boy looks so gay and good-tempered; trying to teach his dog to dance, and laughing at his own folly all the time;—whilst the other, leaning against the tree, with a thoughtful look and graceful air, has something strikingly noble in the expression of his features."

"Ay, there it is—graceful! strikingly noble! and you like the elder boy the best," remarked the Baronet, pettishly.

"I do not quite know; but I think I should like the

youngest best for an hour, or so, when I was in a very wild and playful mood; and the elder for a longer time, when willing to enact the sage."

"The younger only for your hours of folly! I thank you, Miss Darrell."

Katharine looked towards him, struck with his pettish tone; then coloured and became embarrassed, an embarrassment increased by Mr. Bell's sarcastic laugh.

"I beg your pardon. I am so sorry;—but I had no idea — I never saw the likeness," stammered Katharine.

"Pray do not distress yourself, Miss Darrell, I am used to these things, having lived long enough in the world to know that a Baronet must give place to an Earl."

"But I am very much distressed that I should, though unintentionally, have said any thing that could annoy you;—you who have been so kind, so very kind, bearing with all my childish simplicity, and thinking only of giving me pleasure. Will you not forgive me?"

"I should be more savage than I have already shown myself, could I withstand that gentle tone. You must be shocked at such a display of pettishness, and in my own house, too. You are to see me in my worst colours to-day—all my weak points exposed. The truth is, that Mr. Bell, (if you stay within hearing you must take the consequences," he said, bowing mischievously to that gentleman) "and my cousin, the Earl of Ermiston, are *les bêtes noires* of my imagination. For my feelings towards the former you may perhaps account — my feelings towards the latter I will explain. When that picture was taken Edgar Morven and myself were staying with a distant relative, afterwards my guardian, as he had long been his. I ought to have loved Morven, for there was much to admire in his character; but I did not;—most probably never shall;—and on this one point we feel alike. I would do him no harm, and I might do him good, if it would not cost me too much trouble, or perhaps I might do him more good from the

very extent of the trouble out of a spirit of pride; but I delight not in his society—never select him as a confidant; and cannot help being aware of a feeling of jealousy and anger when he is preferred, and using greater endeavours to shine in his presence. I pretend not to defend this, only to account for it; it is the evil consequence of injudiciously excited emulation.

"However kind Mrs. Hilton may gloss over the matter, I certainly was some years ago the most mischievous and riotous of boys.—I leave you to say what I am as a man. Now, my worthy guardian and his lady were the most sober and demure of human beings, consequently horrified at my boyish pranks and misdemeanours. Lectures! Lectures! Lectures! nothing but lectures all day long—prosy, lengthy lectures, as if read from a book to one in whom they felt no interest;—duty—talk—not a single appeal to the heart; so I listened—that is, was silent, not going to sleep, if I could help it; but I fear I was only the more riotous to compensate to myself for these never-ending, wearying discourses; thus ever furnishing fresh subjects for censure and annoyance. The lectures on general principles not succeeding, emulation, as my guardian termed it, was resorted to. Edgar Morven, naturally of a calmer temperament, was held up to me as a fitting model. 'I never knew Edgar Morven to do this—I never heard Edgar Morven say that.' It was nothing but Edgar Morven morning, noon, and night; I was sick of the very name, and resolved to dislike its bearer. A laudable resolve you think—was it not a natural one? People little know the evil tempers they excite by these personal emulations.

"I determined to dislike Edgar Morven, and I succeeded. He was three years my senior, and far my superior in beauty of person and elegance of manner; as for learning, I declared, and I still believe with truth, that I was more than his equal, though his gravity made all suppose him the wiser of the two. Distantly related to the Earl of Ermiston, the sudden death of his father,

an officer in the army, had reduced his mother to a very scanty income, wherewith to provide for the wants of herself and only child in a style somewhat answering to their birth, for beneath that she would not stoop. A prouder woman than Mrs. Morven never breathed—she would have starved rather than submit to any thing which she considered derogatory to the noble blood of the Morvens and Stratherns. Her pride and poverty estranged her from most of her connections, but even the pinchings of penury never caused her to swerve from her purpose; and in justice to her maternal love, I must admit that she thought nothing a sacrifice for the welfare of her son; and I believe concealed half her own privations whilst she brought him up to consider all things secondary to the upholding his name and family. She never forgave my father for offering to place her son, before there was the slightest chance of his becoming an Earl, with one of the first Bankers in town, promising to aid him hereafter; and I have little doubt that I was shown no favour in consequence. A Morven in trade! The thought alone was profanation! With personal beauty rarely surpassed, graceful manners, and a temper usually placid, though a taunt at his poverty and the consequent slights and privations, could rouse him to fury, Edgar Morven was one of the most wretched of human beings. The pride his parent had so cherished was eating away his very life. His delicate health, his mother's constant murmurs and bitter complaints;—his own over-sensitiveness, had crushed the buoyant hopes of youth; he had much of the glooming forethought of the man mingled with the fretfulness and impatience of the boy. What was to become of him without money to enter any of the few professions which Mrs. Morven's prejudices would allow him to attempt? Was he to struggle on thus through life, his pride and his poverty maintaining eternal warfare? Even then he was sinking into despondency, pining beneath the wrestling of his mind against his fate. I was too penetrating not to see much of this, though an occasional word that escaped

him, when irritated by taunts, alone betrayed his feelings.

"Had we met as strangers—had his mother been less haughty—or had I not been lectured into hating, Edgar Morven and myself might have been on friendly terms; and I should probably have soon learnt to love as well as pity him; but this was not to be. Mrs. Morven showed her dislike at our first introduction, and blamed my father in my hearing for what she termed a *mésalliance*, because my mother, one of the most amiable of beings, was only a poor clergyman's daughter. I fired up in my father's defence—she retorted—her son, understanding that I had taunted him with poverty, joined in the *mêlee*, and from that moment there was open war between us, most active on my part, I must admit, being of a more energetic disposition. Of course, in all disputes I was pronounced in fault, which by no means increased my regard for my cousin. I rebelled at being painted on the same piece of canvass, but the good-tempered artist won me over by putting in my favourite dog, though I am sure he has made me look more amiable than I really did. There was another cause of ill-will between us. An old Scotch servant of Mrs. Morven's pretending to second-sight, predicted that each should cross the hopes of the other; and that we should be rivals in love.

"We were men ere we met again, and our boyish disputes were not renewed; we are polite and obliging if we meet—occasionally visit; and the world calls us friends; and, as the world goes, we are friends!—we know how much, and how little so.

"Happily for him, the death of Lord Ermiston and his son in the same malignant fever, by giving him wealth and rank, released him from the struggle between pride and poverty which was wearing life away. The more amiable qualities of Edgar Morven show forth in the Earl of Ermiston; and he is generally esteemed—universally admired. Even the pride of Mrs. Morven has been softened by prosperity; and we no longer meet on cat and dog terms.

"There, Miss Darrell, as a penance for my petulance, I have made a humiliating confession; and really as honest a one as my self-love would permit. I dare say I was the most to blame; and I seek not to defend my present touchiness on the subject of a preference for my striking and graceful cousin. Will you not give me absolution?"

"Rather admiration: few would so generously confess an error, and to a stranger;" replied Katharine kindly, having been much interested in his rapid sketch.

"Singular being!" remarked Mr. Bell. "You have said more evil in this matter of yourself, than I would have said of you: a quarter of this blame from me would have put you in a blaze."

"Ay, sir; we bear with patience from a friend what we resent from a foe."

"A foe!" murmured Mr. Bell; "strange that no one regards me as a friend!"

"Stranger if they did, sir! I doubt if my cousin Ermiston would thank you for wishing the deceased Earl to rise from the grave; and interpose between him and the title."

"I have no wish of the sort."

"Indeed! then it is only I who am honoured with this peculiar mark of your regard: my gratitude should be an hundred fold."

"One plant but flourishes the more for the storm that uproots another:—your cousin sinks beneath misfortune —your energy rises to subdue it!"

"So you would flatter me into gratitude, Mr. Bell, and then laugh at my folly; but that plan will not succeed. Leave me Eustace Park; and you may call me what you please—idler, popinjay, and county fool!"

"The time may come when you will call yourself all these, and worse, Sir Herbert."

The Baronet made no reply, but drew Katharine's attention to the other pictures.

"What likeness have you discovered, Miss Banham?" he inquired shortly after, on hearing that young lady and others, who had entered the room with her, discus-

sing some resemblance ; whose he could not distinctly catch.

"No discovery of mine, Sir Herbert ; I see no resemblance : the credit, if any, is due to Mrs. Bampton, who has found out a likeness between Miss Darrell and Lord Ermiston."

"Miss Darrell like Lord Ermiston !" exclaimed the Baronet, with a mocking laugh. "Really, Mrs. Bampton, the discoverer of the powers of steam was not to be compared to you."

"You may laugh as you please, Sir Herbert, but the likeness is clear enough. I appeal to Mr. Bell."

Mr. Bell put on his spectacles with most provoking deliberation, and after scrutinizing Katharine, who protested in vain against being so critically examined, he pronounced in favour of Mrs. Bampton.

"There certainly is a resemblance, though very slight."

"I knew how you would decide," remarked Sir Herbert, quickly.

One or two agreed with Mr. Bell and Mrs. Bampton, whilst the rest denied the faintest shadow of resemblance.

"Now for the Oriel chamber ; and then you have seen all worth seeing at Eustace Park," said their young host, now quite restored to his usual temper, which had been ruffled by Mr. Bell's remarks and the discussion on his cousin. Once out of sight of the portrait he was himself again, amusing all with his gay discourse.

"Never judge by appearances. As Mr. Bampton says, I have been deceived by appearances more than once. Turn to that demure looking lady with her stately plume, and her prim, closed lips :—she was the arrantest coquette that ever breathed ; caused the death of three lovers—the misery of as many more ; and died bearing her maiden name as a punishment. One lover stabbed himself in her presence, and she upbraided him whilst dying with having spoiled her favourite dress, his blood having spurted out upon her robe. That dusky mark is meant to represent it ; but, from the fading of time,

it only looks like a defect. A second threw himself from off a cliff, she having dared him to the act ; and she had the barbarity as he lay beneath to bid the vultures to the feast ; whilst the third fell in some perilous adventure, driven to desperation by her scorn. She mocked at their deaths and the wooing of others :—but she, too, loved at length. She stood before the altar with a splendid train, her intended lord, one of the noblest Barons of the land. The priest began the service ; but when the Baron should have placed the ring upon her hand, he was struck, as if by catalepsy ; he held the golden circlet out, but could not put it on ; whilst the three, at whose deaths she had mocked, passed slowly by, each placing a ring upon her finger. The service was concluded ; for the priest could not pause, nor the lady resist ; none could interfere, for the glassy glare of the spectre bridegrooms was as a resistless spell on all. The benediction was pronounced, and three dead husbands bore away one living bride. Four saddled steeds were at the gate. The spectre bridegrooms aided the bride to mount with a gallantry that might lesson the bridegrooms of earth ; and then away !—away !—across the land ; flames issuing from their horses' nostrils, sparks falling from their manes.—Away ! away !—with silent speed, for the lady neither spoke nor screamed. The honey-moon had passed ; and the lady was found on her couch in her bridal attire as when she had left the altar. She never spoke of the past ; and none dared to question. The Baron died within the week ; and no one after that was venturesome enough to woo the lady. At her funeral three black figures uninvited walked as mourners, departing, as they came, unknown. Where they had touched the pall, it shrivelled up as parchment in the flames ; and voices that were none of earth joined in the requiem for the dead. The coffin was opened some time after—there was no body there ! See the horrible effect of cruelty and coquetry ! I always tell the tale to young ladies as a warning. Bear it in mind, Miss Darrell, and be gracious to your wooers."

"Is this true, Mrs. Hilton?" asked Katharine, turning to the wondering house-keeper.

"La, ma'am, it is impossible to say what is true, and what is not, Sir Herbert tells so many new stories every day; but I never heard a stranger one than that. I always understood that it was the first Lady Eustace, who died before her husband; as good and quiet a lady as needs to be. I am sure the epitaph in the church says so."

"Believe an epitaph, Mrs. Hilton! did ever wise man or woman do so yet?" exclaimed her merry master.

"Really, Sir Herbert Eustace, I must say that this conduct is most unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and discreditable. You told me the other day that the lady was supposed to have been a great favourite, indeed privately married to Prince Henry, eldest son of James the First. I repeated the same to Mr. Hopton, the great antiquarian and genealogist, and we turned over every book in his library to ascertain the fact; nay, he wrote to Mr. Parsons and some others on the subject. I must say again, Sir Herbert, such conduct is unjustifiable, un—"

"Before you proceed, Mr. Bampton, are you sure—quite sure, that this is the portrait? Are you not thinking of the one in the hall—the lady who married Henri de Jansen?"

"Yes, Sir Herbert, I am quite sure that this is the portrait; and that you said the lady had been privately married to Prince Henry. The antiquaries have been sifting the matter these three months; and several papers have been written on the subject. I shall not mince the matter, Sir Herbert: you cannot expect that I should; and you will find—"

Here Mr. Bampton's discourse was cut short by a summons from a brother amateur antiquary; and the Baronet, who now gave way to his mirth, was spared the threat of what he should have to endure.

"Fie upon you! You will be the death of poor Mr. Bampton; ridicule to him is worse than Prussic acid!

You ought to be put in the corner for telling stories," exclaimed several of his guests.

"This is the gratitude that I am to expect for hunting dusty and worm-eaten tomes to find pretty and instructive legends wherewith to entertain you ladies," replied the incorrigible Baronet. "The fact is, that you are displeased at the moral of my tale, and thus endeavour to throw discredit on the story; but you cannot disprove it; so I warn you to be merciful."

"Is it really true then?" asked a very matter-of-fact young lady.

"True? to be sure! Let those take heed who doubt, lest the three dark bridegrooms and the bride should visit them at dead of night. Even you, Miss Darrell, are ungrateful enough to look incredulous. Say no when wooed, at your peril;—remember, I have warned you!"

"I am not alarmed," said the laughing girl.

"Do you mean that you do not believe my tale?"

"Not one word, without a certificate of its truth from the antiquaries. Will you apply to them?"

"Cruel! not yet; I must keep out of their way for awhile. Now I suppose we must return, since I have nothing further to show, and some of the party are getting impatient."

"And all your pretty stories are exhausted," added Katharine, playfully.

"Not so, as you shall find; I scorn the imputation."

He kept his word to the horror of Mr. Bampton, the wonder of Mr. George Banham, who always listened to the Baronet with open mouth and eyes, and the delight of all the rest, save Mr. Bell. Sir Herbert told a tale of every remarkable object, and generally with such gravity that the Society of Antiquaries stood a chance of being again put in commotion by the reports of Mr. Bampton, only half sceptical despite his late annoyance.

"Remember, Miss Darrell, that you promised I should go with you and hear your report to Mrs. Arnold," said the Baronet, lifting Katharine from her horse.

"Come, then!" she replied, dancing across the hall;

she bearing the bouquet, he the strawberries, which his servant had carried carefully.

"See, dear mamma, what I have brought you! And I have been so happy!" cried the animated girl, kneeling before Mrs. Arnold, throwing off her hat, and shaking back her long bright curls. "See here are beautiful flowers! and look at these strawberries! Such a dear old gardener, too! and such a beautiful house, and such strange sights! I only wanted you there and I should have been quite—quite happy! I like Eustace Park almost as well as Beechen Cliff; and Sir Herbert has promised me a thousand pretty things, and told me a thousand pretty stories;—all true—as true as Jack and the Bean Stalk," she added, archly.

"Which—the promises, or the stories?" asked Mrs. Arnold, happy in her favourite's happiness.

"Oh, I hope the promises are all really true—are they not?" looking up at the Baronet.

"You may depend on those; and their fulfilment shall not be contingent on your belief of my stories; and that shows great magnanimity, considering your mortifying incredulity."

"Thank you! then I shall count indeed on the doves, and the pigeons, and the puppy, and the flowers. Such beautiful flowers! and such a dear little puppy! May I not have them, mamma?"

"Why, you are become quite a child again," replied Mrs. Arnold, smiling at her raptures. "I am afraid Sir Herbert must have found it difficult to keep you in any order."

"I assure you I did; for she paid little heed to anything I said; and I was obliged to threaten her with your displeasure, and various other bugaboos."

"Now, shame on you, Sir Herbert! you know you encouraged all my wildness."

"Now, shame on you, Miss Darrell! I appeal to Miss Banham. Did not I behave inimitably?—just as a careful elder brother should to a wild sister?"

"Exactly so! not the shadow of reproach can rest on you;" replied Miss Banham, acquiescing readily in

an assertion so pleasing to herself;—she had not the slightest objection to his considering Katharine as a sister.

"There, Miss Darrell! make the *amende* if you please; and assure Mrs. Arnold that you, and all beside, admit I enacted elder brother to perfection."

"A kind elder brother, too;" she replied with grateful warmth, adding playfully, "not only indulging present whims and fancies, but storing my mind for the hereafter with moral tales, as full of truth as wisdom."

"You are incorrigible!" exclaimed the laughing Baronet.

"A family failing—a sister treading in the ways of her elder brother;" observed Miss Banham in most harmonious tones, and with a flattering smile.

CHAPTER V.

"On him each lady's look was bent."
SCOTT.

"Schemes! Wit plans—and Fortune sets aside."

"Now, Miss Darrell, to put the sincerity of your regard for me to the test," began Sir Herbert Eustace, joining Katharine in the drawing room; the one or two who had descended after the labours of the toilet being occupied at the other end of the apartment.

"What an awful beginning!" replied Katharine, gaily. "I am half inclined to deny having any regard for you."

"You who are so pitiful could not be so cruel;—you who are so true could not be so false;—the whole world of Sallowfield has decided to its satisfaction that we have a brotherly and sisterly regard; and you, who have stood up as my champion against those fearful Ogres, in common parlance, Bell and Bampton, surely you will not desert me in my hour of need?"

"You know how to win my aid by appealing to my generosity, which Mr. Bell has warned me will one day lead me into difficulties. In what awful peril do you stand? Are all the antiquaries coming in a body to

declaim against you? or has the ancestress whom you so defamed appeared with all her bridegrooms?"

"Cruel creature! to remind me of my errors and their consequences. Yet these I might have borne:—my peril is more fearful still."

"Indeed! What can it be?"

"Dethronement? Nothing less than dethronement! Will you not aid me? With your assistance I shall still hope to subdue the rebels."

"What do you mean? Is a rival *diseur* coming to Sallowfield? Fear not a competitor."

"Hard-hearted! thus to mock my misery. I fear no rival *diseur*—it is a rival idol that I dread."

"An idol?"

"Yes; have you not heard?"

"I have heard nothing particular."

"In truth? Then you are not aware that my irresistible cousin, Edgar Morven, Earl of Ermiston—

> 'Who never did an *awkward* thing,
> And never said a *droll* one,'

is to be here to-night, on his way into Wiltshire."

"I was not aware of this. Is he the person whose portrait I saw at Eustace Park?"

"The same. And now do you not pity me?"

"I fear I am not as pitiful as you imagine. Though you may not absolutely desire his presence, I understood that you no longer regarded him with such great dislike as to feel that presence disagreeable."

"Ah, Miss Darrell! with no ambition to reign yourself, you cannot comprehend my peril. Listen. I should care nothing about meeting my cousin on neutral ground—out in the wide world;—there one expects competitors; but thirty miles round Eustace Park I consider my own domain:—there I expect to reign Lord Paramount. A young bachelor Baronet with no absolute deformity; not a positive fool, whatever Mr. Bell may say, and above all, with a fine estate, and ten thou-

sand a year, I consider that I am, and ought to be for such a circuit,

'Monarch of all I survey,'

and have

'Wives before me whence to choose.'

"You have seen what an idol I am at Sallowfield; and I am not less so at other places, I assure you. Whether the homage paid me now would be withheld should my uncle John return, I am not called on to determine."

"Do you believe that it would be withheld, Sir Herbert?" inquired Katharine, half in jest and half in earnest.

"Perhaps I do not—yet it might be so, nevertheless; you are too young and generous yourself to understand these things; at any rate, it is very delightful to be an idol; but now I must be unsphered. A Baronet of ten thousand a year cannot compete with an Earl of fifteen, a handsomer fellow too by far even I must admit; and some think the very perfection of grace and high breeding. Being an Earl, particularly here where Earls are so scarce, no mental defect would outweigh his title, even if I could prove any which I cannot—or will not; so the only debate, is whether I shall resign my sovereignty with a good grace—fly the field—or battle for my right. Will you advise me?"

"With pleasure; it is so very flattering at seventeen to be consulted. I, being a woman, protest against your doing battle for your right, since warfare is not pleasing to our pitying hearts: you being a man, I decide against flight, such telling of cowardice; so my advice is, if you cannot retain your absolute sovereignty; and absolute power brings little good to ruled or ruler; that you should meet your rival as a friend, offering him with a good grace a portion of your idolship."

"No: no. *Aut Cæsar, aut nullus!* There can be no community between Edgar Morven and Herbert Eustace;" replied the Baronet, with an abruptness that

spoke more of earnest than of jest; then, marking Katharine's surprise, he added, in a lighter tone, yet still with a touch of seriousness, "my old feelings are not quite subdued, as you perceive; and I verily believe, notwithstanding all my jesting, and the little store I set upon the flattering words and smiles so showered on me, that I shall ill brook seeing him the *cynosure* of woman's eyes. However, I shall abide the trial as you advise. But you—you are not like most—you will not change?"

"Do not think it," replied Katharine warmly, touched by his appeal.

"*Vive Henri Quatre donc!* As long as you are on my side I fear no league, and shall be conqueror yet."

Katharine laughed at his pretended triumph; and asked how long Lord Ermiston intended to remain.

"Perhaps till his fastidious taste shall receive some fearful shock. I would not be one of the Banham family during his stay, proud as they are of the honour, for the privilege of seeing all that ocean has in its rich depths. Such fussing and fretting! and such fright, lest the said fussing and fretting should be observed! He ought to marry a country hoyden to medicine his fastidiousness, only it would be martyrdom to both:—neither could survive the year."

"If so very fastidious, why come at all?"

"The house bears the character of being well arranged; and who can resist Mrs. Banham's friendly pressing, and the fascinations of the young ladies? Besides, Mr. Banham was once of essential service to Major Morven; and Ermiston is not ungrateful."

"Not quite such a hobgoblin, then, as you have been trying to persuade me," said Katharine, with a smile.

"Yes, all that is horrible. Remember! you are pledged to this belief."

"No: I am only pledged not to change my opinion of yourself."

And it was well for the keeping of her word that she was not pledged to think Lord Ermiston the fearful personage his cousin had jestingly portrayed him.

His manners and appearance were peculiarly prepossessing—to many irresistible ; and if there was at times a something rather stately in his demeanour, it only seemed to harmonize with his courtly elegance, making his attentions the more flattering. What might have appeared offensive pride in a more energetic character, was only dignity in him.

As Sir Herbert had asserted :

> " He never did an *awkward* thing,
> And never said a *droll* one."

Lord Ermiston and drollery ! There was worse than treason in the bare idea ! Love and a rabbit skin were far less incompatible.

He was polite, scrupulously polite to all ; and if any thing shocked his fastidious taste, the very shocking was only proved by a slight accession of dignity. You could not imagine his lordship would ever be guilty of a rudeness, of this he seemed as incapable as of an awkwardness; and his manner bore the stamp of sincerity. Though no great talker generally, he could, at fitting times, be animated ; and there was not that chilling feel in his society which occasionally accompanies excessive elegance. The greatest charm of that elegance was the absence of all appearance of study :—if not originally his by nature, it had become a portion of his being by long habit—the natural of art.

Mrs. Arnold and the Earl were mutually delighted ; her gentleness accorded with his ideas of what woman should be; and there was good reason to suppose that her *protegée*, though his antipodes in manner, shared in the prepossession. There seems a sympathy in contrast, as in harmony, however Irish this may sound :—there are attractions which can scarcely be accounted for on philosophical principles ; and are perfectly incomprehensible to the unlearned. Lord Ermiston's characteristic was an harmonious elegance ; an almost imperturbable quietude : he never wondered—was rarely delighted, and there was nothing about him striking

or compelling: his mind had grace, rather than power: —even the perfection of his features required examination to be duly appreciated. He was not a man of impulse: but well practised in the modes and requirements of the world.

The very reverse of this was Katharine Darrell. Not that she was deficient in elegance, but her's was the wild grace of nature—the elegance of a refined and delicate mind, rather than a harmony of manner, arising from a mingling with the polished. She felt wonder and delight, and still gave way to almost childlike bursts of gaiety; nay, even asked the Earl to join in them, by looks, without the fear of a rebuking gravity. He was the accomplished pupil of society—she the untutored child of nature;—hoping all things, seeing all things in the brightness of her own sunny spirit.

Days, weeks had passed, and yet Lord Ermiston and Sir Herbert Eustace were visitors at Sallowfield: and still Katharine Darrell smiled on the young Baronet, talking gaily with him as on their first acquaintance; but her thoughts dwelt more on the words of his cousin; and her eyes unconsciously turned to him for sympathy and approbation.

"Well, Maria, what do you say now?" asked Mrs. Banham of her eldest daughter, who stood arranging her curls in that lady's dressing room.

"I say now, what I said before; give me time, and I shall be Lady Ermiston. So well have I studied his tastes that not once have I shocked them; and you saw how readily, I might say eagerly, he consented to prolong his visit."

"I did. But are you sure that Katharine Darrell is not in your way?"

"What a question!" replied Maria, with a contemptuous smile. "Katharine Darrell—the mere country girl, startling one a thousand times a day with her bursts of childlike gaiety and gratitude, rival Maria Banham in the estimation of the Earl of Ermiston! You are no flatterer by the supposition. Not but what Katharine is an endearing creature from her very wild-

ness, though not the beauty Mrs. Arnold fancies. I could love her if it were requisite."

"I hope you are right;—but he is always near her," said the anxious mother.

"Yes; and I would have him so. The poor child has taken a fancy to me, and rarely leaves my side. Some of the gentlemen find her *naïveté*, as they term it, very attractive; but for Lord Ermiston—why her sudden sallies almost seduce him into wonderment. Depend upon it that he thinks her as I think her, a grateful, animated girl—fited for the country, not the court. She must be subdued and harmonized, before her sister-in-law, the Countess of Ermiston, can present her as Mrs. George Banham."

"I hope you know what you are about, Maria; for I tell you and your sister fairly that there is little time to lose."—"And when are you to be Lady Eustace, Charlotte?"

"When Sir Herbert asks me."

"And when will that be?"

"Soon, I imagine."

"Indeed! You are both sanguine;—I hope you may not be deceived."

"I hope so, too."

"I warn you not to be too secure; and I ask you, as I asked your sister, may not Katharine Darrell cross your hopes?"

"Oh, no! she is so very a child—so perfectly unformed—so singularly natural."

"Singularly natural, I admit; but I doubt if that nature has not charms for many; and with a child's gaiety and simplicity she has a woman's feeling;—with a child's manner, a woman's heart. Look to both the cousins."

Her daughters laughed.

"Sir Herbert is ever near her, as is Lord Ermiston."

"Yes; we are all together; and she certainly is interesting. For the first day I was uneasy, but the Baronet's manner to us both is quite changed now, and I am

convinced he only praised her then in the hope of piquing me. He evidently considers her only as a fascinating child; indeed he told me so; and she as evidently only considers him as a kind friend. They really are as the careful brother and the wild sister he spoke of on the day of the visit to Eustace Park. You saw how quickly he consented to stay, on the plea of some painting at his own house, when I joined my entreaties to yours."

"I cannot deny that; but my anxiety makes me fearful. If I could see my daughters well married I should be happy."

"I think you have every chance of that," said Maria.

"How does George get on with Katharine?"

"He gets as near her as he can; is always ready to tie her sandal, hand her a chair, or carry her shawl, when not too much occupied in staring at Sir Herbert: I am afraid his wooing does not thrive. She is always very kind, and listens politely when he talks to her; but all this, I take it, is more for our sake than his; and perhaps we may persuade her to become our sister:—he is too obstinate to take a hint."

"I fear, Maria, that she is too much flattered by the other gentlemen."

"One or two admire her, but she is such a thorough simpleton as not to know it; and as for taking advantage of their admiration, that is entirely beyond her comprehension."

"All the better this simplicity for our plans; and I doubt if Mrs. Arnold is much wiser. As long as the girl does not cross your hopes let no one breathe a suspicion of her birth, since I intend her to be my daughter:—should she interfere, let her look to it!—but we must be cautious. Mrs. Arnold will endure no slight on her favourite; and my own friend has wealth at her own disposal."

CHAPTER VI.

"Rail on! I sinn'd—and I must bear:
The tongue of malice has no sting
Like my own thoughts."

"WHEN is Walker's marriage with Miss Stephens to take place?" asked Sir Herbert of Mr. Hensworth, one of the numerous dinner guests at Sallowfield on the same day in which the preceding conversation had taken place.

"That is a good one, Sir Herbert! to pretend not to know of the match being off."

"I know nothing of the sort. How should I?"

"How should you? Why, it was your doing."

"How can you fancy that. I have never interfered in the matter: on the contrary, I esteem Walker, and like the little I have seen of Miss Stephens."

"What, after the violent flirtation, to say the least of it, that you saw her carry on in the wood?"

"What do you mean, Hensworth? This is all a riddle to me: I never saw any thing to disapprove of in Miss Stephens."

"Come, come, Sir Herbert, this will not do. You have too good a memory to have forgotten Miss Stephens's flirting in the wood at the back of her father's house with a very handsome young man in the dusk of the evening. If you have forgotten the tale, I have not,

or my friend either. It was a capital story! and you told it so inimitably. Johnson declares he never laughed so much in his life. Then Walker's looks—first refusing to believe—and then pretending to be indifferent. Oh, it was capital!"

"You do not mean to say that my story caused the breaking off the match?"

"I do, though. Walker went to the lady in a precious rage—she replied with spirit—and when he declared her unworthy of his love, and threatened to leave her, she bade him do so and return no more. So some say; others assert that he wrote to decline the honour of her hand, convinced that his love alone would not content her. I know not which story is the true one, but that the match is off is certain. Walker was always quick of temper and inclined to jealousy; and you played on that temper well: the story did you immortal credit."

"Any thing but credit," replied the Baronet quickly. "I was sorry afterwards that I had carried the joke so far, but concluded Walker would seek his lady-love, as I bade him, and that all would be explained: my leaving the neighbourhood the next day prevented my learning to the contrary. I shall not easily forgive myself this folly."

"Folly! 'Tis thy vocation, Hal," remarked Mr. Bell sarcastically; but the Baronet took no notice of the observation.

"Never vex yourself about the matter, Sir Herbert. The lover will get another mistress—the mistress another lover—and all will be well. It is no such rare occurrence a match being broken off; and since the young lady was such a flirt—"

"The young lady was no flirt, at least that I know of," replied the Baronet frankly. "The gentleman was her brother just returned from abroad; and I concluded that you and your friend knew that it was all a joke."

"A joke? Do you mean that it was nothing but a joke, Sir Herbert? I could not have imagined it possi-

ble. I have heard you praised for making a good story out of nothing, but I never suspected you of doing so then ; and therefore did not scruple to repeat the tale. This is carrying the matter a little too far :—a sober man does not like the chance of being called in question for his words," observed Mr. Hensworth sulkily ; far more vexed at having taken for truth what was but jest, than at all the misery which had ensued.

" It was carrying the matter too far," said the Baronet as frankly as before, though his cheek had flushed at the rebuking tone. " Where is Walker now ?"

" Gone abroad, I believe."

" I have been much to blame, and am truly grieved."

" Pooh. Pooh, Sir Herbert ; your good nature thinks too much of this," remarked another guest. " As Hensworth says, it is no such rare occurrence :—the girl will get a new lover ; and, depend upon it, both marry within the year. Girls are always flirts ; and I dare say you said no more than the truth."

" I tell you I never saw Miss Stephens flirt in my life."

" Nor any other pretty girl, I suppose," replied the gentleman incredulously.

" I speak only of Miss Stephens ; and see no reason why I should be doubted when I tell the truth," remarked the Baronet warmly.

" Did you ever read the fable of the Boy and the Wolf, Sir Herbert Eustace ?" asked a sarcastic voice at his elbow.

" I never expected any thing but reproach and sarcasm from you, Mr. Bell ; but, in the present instance, you can scarcely say worse of me than I think of myself ; so I must submit in patience."

Mr. Bell made no reply ; but there was little sign of his asperity being softened.

" You think too much of this, Sir Herbert," said another. " Walker's jealousy should bear the blame—he deserves it. Why did not he go to the lady, and ask her as you told him ? It will teach him greater

coolness for the future ; and you can write to him, and the lady, too, if you like it ;—the making up of a quarrel, you know, is the renewing of love."

"To be sure ! When was a rich, lively, wasteful, young Baronet in the wrong ?" remarked Mr. Bell.

"You are too severe," interposed Charlotte Banham : "Sir Herbert meant no harm. Where will you find one with a kinder heart, or more inclined to assist every friend ? And with his wit and talent, one cannot wonder that he should embellish a little."

"Meant no harm ! Nor did the man who entered the powder magazine with an unguarded candle ; yet two hundred persons lost their lives ! Kind heart ! So has the spendthrift—and the fool ;—yet wealth is squandered—the owner becomes a beggar ;—and the worthy alone have failed to profit by the squandering. Wit and talent will embellish ! For what purpose ? To raise the laugh of folly !—to win the plaudits of the idle, the wicked, and the thoughtless ! Splendid ambition ! Who does not sigh for wit and talent ?"

"Come, come, Bell : we know you always say worse than you mean," remarked Mr. Banham. "Sir Herbert already suffers more than enough for his joke."

"Yet would do the same to-morrow :—there are some animals that take long in the reclaiming."

"Oh, fie !—for shame ! Mr. Bell," exclaimed several of the ladies, with whom the Baronet was a great favourite.

"Come here, Lord Ermiston, and help me to defend your cousin," said Mr. Banham, who had not discovered the coolness between the relatives ;—their manner to each other having been what the world considered friendly.

"Ermiston will not defend me," remarked Sir Herbert quickly.

"I am no Quixote, Eustace, if that is what you mean : nor do I enter with your delight into a jest ; but neither do I join in Mr. Bell's severity. You will no doubt repair the evil, and be more cautious for the future. You

promised me to sing, Miss Banham :—your witching tones will harmonize our thoughts."

"Thank you, for your defence, most trusty and well beloved cousin."

The Baronet's remark brought a slight accession of colour into the Earl's cheek, but induced no reply. His lordship was not a person to engage in warfare unless compelled to do so, or irritated beyond control.

"Indeed, Sir Herbert, I hope you will be more cautious for the future, as your noble cousin so wisely advises. Such stories are most unjustifiable and unwarrantable ; and now that we are on the subject, I must ask you a question which I have been some minutes wishing to put. Did not you tell me that Mr. Stagg had been called to the bar ?" said the prosy Mr. Bampton.

"Certainly," replied the Baronet, with a droll mingling of shame, mischief, and vexation.

"There, Mr. Banham ! you seemed to doubt me. You are quite sure, Sir Herbert ? May I ask who told you."

"I forget ;—some lawyer, I believe."

"You know it for certain ?"

"I saw him at the bar."

"Where, Sir Herbert ? Excuse my questions, but—"

"You remember the confusion among the antiquaries ; and the hubbub concerning the Sanhein fossil," exclaimed the Baronet, forgeting all his former regret in the pleasure of mystifying the prosy, pompous, boring Mr. Bampton."

"Really, Sir Herbert Eustace, both those cases were unjustifiable and unwarrantable—quite beneath a person of your rank and consideration ; but we will confine ourselves at present to Mr. Stagg," observed Mr. Bampton pompously, with a heightened colour, the commotion which he had caused among the antiquarians and geologists being a standing and vexatious joke against him. "Where did you see Mr. Stagg ?"

"Some where on the western circuit : Exeter, I think."

"And you said that his father had also practised at the bar?"

"Yes ; one is as certain as the other."

"There, Mr. Banham, I told you so : really people should be careful how they spread reports—no man's good name is safe—such gossiping is most unjustifiable and unwarrantable. It is but fair to tell you now, Sir Herbert, what has induced me to ask these questions, for I am not a curious person. After what you said I invited Mr. Stagg to my house, and introduced him to Mr. Cooper, who asked him to dinner ; and now the report is that Mr. Stagg's father kept an inn, and the young man acted as waiter. I must beg you, Sir Herbert, to write to Mr. Cooper, or contradict the report in person, as I hear that gentleman is very angry with me for the introduction. Of course you can have no objection to vouch for Mr. Stagg's having been at the bar, and his father before him?"

"None in the world," replied the Baronet, no longer able to repress a laugh, in which he was joined by nearly all withing hearing, whilst Mr. Bampton stared at the general mirth, perfectly unconscious of the mystification and play on words.

"What is the meaning of all this laughter, gentlemen? After the late warning Sir Herbert can scarcely have been daring enough to fabricate another tale : but perhaps his regret was only pretended."

"Breed a wolf as you may, he will still look to the wood," remarked Mr. Bell in his usual sarcastic manner.

The Baronet turned from his look, feeling the justice of his rebuke; whilst Mr. Banham, taking Mr. Bampton aside, explained the mystification, and tried to pacify his wrath; but in the latter he utterly failed. The pompous proser was not to be mollified.

"Sir Herbert Eustace," he began, in a much louder tone than usual, bursting from his host's detaining hold, "I consider your conduct in this affair not only unjustifiable and unwarrantable, but quite incompatible with your station in society. First,—unjustifiable from one

gentleman to another, more particularly from a young man to one more advanced in years;—to one, I may say it without vanity, who never allows himself for the sake of displaying wit to make out a good story:—secondly, unwarrantable, as no conduct of mine has furnished you with an excuse for making me the subject of a foolish jest, seeing that I never jest myself. I disdain it as beneath me—as below a man of wisdom and learning —fit only for boys and triflers.—Unwarrantable towards me, considering my birth and station; birth perhaps equal to your own, Sir Herbert Eustace, though my ancestors did not think a title of sufficient value to be bought:—unwarrantable towards Mr. Cooper, a most respectable man, with several thousands a year, and likely to increase his wealth."

"Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear," shouted some of the young men with whom he was no favourite.

"What is the matter?" inquired Mrs. Arnold, entering at the moment, and naturally wondering at the noise.

"Nothing but a Bampton lecture," replied the culprit with a quiet smile, which still more provoked the wrathful haranguer.

"Nothing, Sir Herbert Eustace! is it nothing to rob a parent of his only child? to subject him to the misery of seeing his darling daughter, heiress of his riches, the wife of a low-born fellow, a common waiter? You should bear all the blame of the elopement."

"Elopement! Is this true, Mr. Bampton?"

"True, Sir Herbert! to be sure it is! Have I not said it? Do you suppose all like yourself? And now what defence will you make?"

"None. I would say that I am truly grieved; but having said so once before this evening, you might fairly doubt the truth of my assertion. I have been wrong—very wrong;—and blame me, as you please, I have no right to complain. It is no slight feeling of shame and regret which can induce me to say this, and abide by it."

"And how long will those feelings last? Till the wind shall change?" asked Mr. Bell.

"I have deserved this, and must submit;" replied Sir Herbert, crimsoning to the very temples; more galled at the sarcasms of the cynic than aught else.

"It will be well young man if this shame lead to amendment: a confession of error is of little use without its abandonment," began Mr. Bampton, with a triumphant, self-satisfied tone of rebuke which it required all the Baronet's strong sense of guilt to endure with patience. "Many people seem to think that if they say they have been wrong, they should be absolved from all further consequences; but this is a very mistaken idea. They should go beyond that—they should take advice and example from those older and wiser than themselves. Having seen the deplorable effects of a course so unjustifiable and unwarrantable, I will venture to hope, with your cousin, that you will be more cautious for the future. Doubtless Lord Ermiston will advise you: and his steadiness and dislike to idle jests may stand as sureties for a different course."

"Pardon me, Mr. Bampton; I must decline becoming surety for my cousin, having so many errors of my own to answer for."

"No, no, my lord; you are a model of a young man; I have not heard you tell a good story, as they call it, or say a good thing since your arrival. I own it would be unjustifiable to insist on your becoming surety for your cousin's future conduct; but you can join me in giving good advice."

"I doubt if good advice from me would much please or profit my cousin Herbert; permit me therefore to resign the task to one so much more highly gifted," replied the Earl, withdrawing, as he bowed, from the extended hand of the proser, put forth to grasp his button.

"You are too modest as to your own powers, my lord; and think too highly of mine," recommenced the gratified discourser; but the conclusion of this second Bampton lecture was only heard by poor Mr.

Banham, on whose button the tiresome lecturer laid strong hold, trying to content himself with his untalkative friend as a listener.

"Who would not be contented to be patiently heard by a host?" remarked one of the party.

Some crowded round the really vexed Baronet, assuring him that he deserved but little blame, as it was only a clever hoax; others dispersed to their own amusements.

"Come and join me in a duet, Sir Herbert—your favourite," said Charlotte Banham soothingly. "Mr. Bampton is enough to put any one in the fidgets. Do coax your cousin into better spirits, Lord Ermiston. There is no such great mischief done;—only a jealous lover put into a tantrum and a miser's daughter eloped."

"You overrate my powers. I own no spell to compel my cousin to good spirits; nor do I think the elopement of a young lady with an innkeeper's son such a trivial misfortune. I am no favourer of a *mésalliance*," replied his lordship.

"No, nor I; but Sir Herbert is so very sorry, and never intended to do harm; besides, Mr. Cooper's own father was only a manufacturer."

"That makes a difference, and there is little evil done; so do, pray laugh, Eustace—the ladies wish it."

"We differ on this point, Ermiston, as we have often done on others; the moral evil is the same:—whether the girl's grandfather was manufacturer or earl, Mr. Cooper's feelings as a parent must be equally wounded. I have been blamed more, and less than I deserve; a hundred invented or embellished stories have been laughed at and applauded, which might equally have wrought a separation or elopement;—it is the act of falsehood, and not its accidental consequence, for which I merit censure."

"You were ever skilful at definitions, Eustace; so settle the point as may best content your own conscience," replied his lordship slightingly, as he turned

to the piano at which Miss Banham had taken her station.

Sir Herbert was annoyed at his cousin's manner: he looked over some prints for a few moments, and then joined Katharine, who was sitting rather apart, arranging some work for Mrs. Banham.

"Are you come to help me?" she said kindly, finding that he did not speak, and seeing that he was ruffled.

"What if I came to upbraid you?"

"What evil have I done?"

"Ask your own heart? Have you kept your promise?"

"I know of none that I have not kept."

"Would you have me believe, then, that you have not gone over to the enemy?" he demanded with some bitterness.

"Whose enemy?"

"Mine—Ermiston."

"Gone over to Lord Ermiston? You put strange questions, Sir Herbert Eustace," she replied with symptoms of displeasure, and a flushing of the cheek which was bent upon her work.

"And you make evasive answers, Miss Darrell."

"I do not understand with what you charge me, Sir Herbert."

"Perhaps you do not wish to understand; I have not before found you hard of comprehension."

"You have not before spoken in riddles."

"Oh! you shall have no cause to complain on that head: I will speak as to a babe. You were pledged before my cousin came to think of me as you did then:—not to side with my rival—not to desert the setting for the rising sun:—in short, not to flout the Baronet because the Earl was by."

"I have done none of this. You cannot mean to accuse me of servility to rank?"

"Not exactly," meeting her indignant look. "You have bowed down to elegance and winning manner, rather than to rank; as yet, you are neither servile nor

calculating. Do you mean to be very grateful for this last admission ?"

"I admire your cousin's virtues."

"Virtues !" he repeated scornfully.

"Yes, virtues: you cannot deny him many, however youthful disagreements may have disunited you."

"You would set it down as malice or envy, if I did deny them."

"I should be very sorry so to do."

"Why sorry ?"

"Because I have received so much of kindness from Sir Herbert Eustace that I should be grieved to think less highly of him."

"Indeed !" he exclaimed with a brightened look ; then added with some embarrassment—"But what could you think of him this evening ?"

"I thought more highly of him than I had ever thought before. There are few who would have confessed error with such frankness ; or borne harsh rebuking with such meekness."

"And you thought this ? Then I am repaid for all my own remorse ;—the galling words of the sarcastic and the pompous, the polite forbearance of the unfeeling."

She had spoken warmly as she had felt ; but there was something in the young man's manner that made her seem more busy with her work.

"Yet you never said a word in my defence," he continued in a more sober tone.

"There was no need, so many spoke ; and little girls, they say, should be seen, not heard."

"You a girl ! You are a woman, with a woman's heart ;—her feelings and her spells."

"You forget my wildness at Eustace Park," she remarked, blushing at his earnestness.

"I do not forget it. It was an outburst of delight in a young, guileless heart—not the mere wonder of a simple child. You have the charms of a child and woman—the guilelessness, the trust of one ;—the depth of feeling—the dignity—the devotion of the other."

"Nay, nay, Sir Herbert; you said yourself that I was but a child."

"I might;—but this evening has proved that all I say must not be relied on."

"So I feel."

"I am no flatterer to you, if that is what you mean;—I hope that you are none to me."

"I a flatterer, Sir Herbert!"

"I will hope not;—but why did you turn away when I was accused? Why did you not join in consoling, if not in defending?"

"Why should I turn away but in delicacy to your embarrassment. And you had as many consolers as defenders."

"Then you really did not turn away in disgust?"

"Certainly not!"

"And you do not think me changed?"

"No, save in one particular; I do hope that you are changed in that."

"I understand, and hope it too, though I shall not be half as amusing and popular. Then you think of me as you did?"

"Only more highly; and now I think you can ask me no more questions."

"Yes, one more. What do you think of Ermiston?"

The question was abrupt;—no wonder Katharine felt embarrassed.

"You do not answer now as promptly as you did before. Do not by praising him mar the perfection of your former speech. I told you that we were not friends, and that I would not willingly yield up my idolship to him."

"You were in jest that evening."

"More in earnest. Did I not describe him truly?"

"You caricatured his fastidiousness," she said, after some hesitation.

"Scarcely; but you are unwilling to admit a fault."

"This is nonsense!—all have faults," she replied with quickness.

"Will you condemn him for his conduct this evening?

Though unmarked by others you should have felt that unfeeling triumph lurked beneath his cold politeness."

"Lord Ermiston judged it more pleasing to your feelings that the subject should be changed, rather than discussed;" she answered hurriedly.

"You cannot quite acquit, Miss Darrell, but you would fain excuse him;—he should be grateful—very grateful;—I should be so, were I the Earl."

He spoke with bitterness; and rose abruptly. Mr. Bell marked his annoyance, and joined him when beyond Katharine's hearing.

"You are a wise man, Sir Herbert. You do what few men can, make wise resolves—and keep them."

"Mr. Bell, there has been more than enough of this for to-night, at least: I have done wrong—and I have been rebuked. Let those who have never broken their resolutions each throw a stone. Think you that I should have a splendid cairn?"

"I should not aid in the accumulation," replied Mr. Bell more kindly, self rebuked.

"But you mistake; I meant not to speak of the slips of the tongue, but the changes of the heart. I would ask if Sir Herbert Eustace holds the feelings of a brother towards Katharine Darrell, as he has been trying to persuade the world—and himself?"

"And by what right would you ask?"

"I would satisfy my thirst for knowledge."

"Thirst for knowledge! You would arm yourself with sharper weapons—you would inflict more deadly wounds.—You have played the Indian as it is, and I edge not your tomahawk—place not my scalp within your hands;—you have tortured and triumphed already."

"Triumphed? Yes: for I am better and worse than men think me," muttered the cynic, looking after the Baronet, who had turned away as he finished speaking.

A few moments more and this morose being was seated by Katharine; and strange to say, whilst he constantly mocked at her fresh, warm feelings, saying that

they could not last, he as constantly sought her society; and when beside her, showed a nearer approach to kindness than he exhibited at any other time.

"You are wrong, Miss Darrell: these two colours are not alike. It is to be hoped you have a clearer perception of shades in character than in worsted."

"I do not boast of being very discriminating in either," she replied, changing the colour without looking up.

"A humble appreciation of your powers in this respect might save you pain; but I doubt if your humility exceeds your knowledge. Fascinated by harmony of tone and grace of manner, you perceive not a deficiency in energy—a want of moral courage. You close your eyes against every token of an over-sensitiveness to ridicule, veiled beneath the more graceful cloak of a fastidious taste. You will not understand that pride and weakness fashion a character, which, however seemingly amiable in many other points, is not such as to repay the devotion of a woman's love; and that woman Katharine Darrell. A strong mind will make itself known; and where all is perfect harmony, no unmodulated tone, no sudden and impulsive movement, no springing into action, there is art, and that may not be trusted:—or there is over-refinement, wasted powers, a trivial mind, without a noble aim;—or there is weakness, which fears ridicule—a moral cowardice; or there is mediocrity that cannot rise above the common herd—that dares not dare:—that may pass unnoted in prosperity, but whose powers rise not in adversity. Such should not be throned in woman's heart!—He is not worthy woman's tender, self-denying love, whom a sneer will change—a laugh will part;—he will be found wanting—he will stand aloof, when the faint heart turns to him for consolation. Wo to you, Katharine Darrell! wo to you, especially if you trust such. You cannot always tread on flowers; choose one who can, and will smooth down a rugged path. The gilded vessel, the child's plaything, rides gaily on a glassy sea:—but life is not a glassy

sea :—the storm must come ! If you would reach the peaceful port, embark not in a summer yacht :—select a ship that can abide the storm—a mind that can maintain its course—that struggles—and will conquer. Look there," he continued, for she made no reply, taking up a highly finished drawing from the table, the performance of Miss Banham, showing more pains than genius, and contrasting it with a bold, free sketch which lay beside it, "There they are exactly, the one all harmony, or insipidity, as I should call it ; a model of weakness ; highly finished—not a stroke wanting—complete as a whole—but how poor a whole ! Without the possibility of amendment, too :—deficient in energy ;—not a bold line : and were such put it would be out of place—it would spoil the keeping. Now look on this ! A bold and vigorous outline—the work of mind, seizing the attention : soul, not manner : thought, not mechanism : —it may be filled up ill ; but it may also be filled up well :—there is the capability of greatness :—there may be faults in the petty details, but the whole will compel admiration, and not weary in the survey. This other makes me yawn. Better choose the bold, the frank, the generous, with all his faults ; he may be rash, unthinking, wasting the powers whose force he knows not ; but the capabilities of amendment are within him. What say you to my exordium ?"

"The tastes of your sex and of ours differ : you naturally prefer the bold and grand, we the gentle and the graceful ;" she replied, treating the question as indifferently as she could, and shunning the scrutiny of her inquisitor.

"I said it could not last, and that Katharine Darrell would soon learn worldly ways—how to deceive, just as thousands have done before," he remarked, in a tone that sent the blood to her brows. "Did I not say that your humility was less than you pretended ? Do you doubt at this moment that you read character correctly ? Do you not expect to deceive me by this show of indifference, this turning an individual feeling into a general

question ? You are fast losing the guilelessness of the child, and acquiring the wiliness of the woman."

Katharine made no reply to his sarcasms ; and rather mollified by her silence, which he construed into an admission of error, he spoke less harshly, when he next addressed her.

"What did you say to vex Sir Herbert Eustace ?"

"Is he vexed ? I am very sorry," she replied with a frankness, which could not be doubted.

"You are only half a woman yet," he remarked with something like a smile ; "and I suppose I must not tempt you wholly to enact the character by insisting on knowing what you said :—but what think you of going to console him ? He has had much to annoy him to-night. See ! there he is, turning over print after print, not knowing all the time whether he is looking at Pekin or Petersburgh. Something you said with or without intention has annoyed him."

"Indeed ! Then I will go and say I am sorry for it : his own frankness deserves the same from others."

She rose as she spoke, taking her work which she had completed.

"Poor child ! that warm heart must suffer much :" was Mr. Bell's thought, as his eyes followed her across the room.

Who would have believed that the cynic could feel pity ?

Sir Herbert continued to turn over the prints without appearing to notice the approach of Katharine, who stood beside him some moments in silence, so stern, so determined not to be appeased did he look. It may appear strange to some that when she did speak it was to make a request and not an apology. Strange ?—it was the tact of a gentle heart, wise in its kindness ; it was less embarrassing to herself and to him : once engage an offended person to do you a favour, however slight, and the reconciliation is half effected. It shows that you are not too proud to be obliged : it gives your foe the pride of obliging.

"Will you be kind enough to hand me that basket, Sir Herbert, that I may put away Mrs. Banham's work?"

The basket was handed without a reply, and his neither starting nor looking up at the request proved his knowledge of her presence. This was discouraging:—she hesitated a moment; and then spoke with her usual frankness, though her manner was slightly embarrassed.

"Having granted one request will you not grant another? Will you not forgive me if I have said any thing to vex you? Believe me, if I have so done, it was unintentional. I could not mean to hurt you, who have been so kind: and my words were badly chosen if they did not convince you how truly I have felt with and for you throughout the evening."

Sir Herbert, starting up, looked keenly at her as she half turned away.

"Would you, indeed, be pained to grieve me?" he demanded quickly.

"Yes, much grieved. Will you forgive me?"

"No, sweet Katharine; I have nothing to forgive. I only was to blame; and should sue for pardon for my churlishness."

Katharine looked grave, as she withdrew the hand which he had taken: she felt annoyed at his gratitude, though she knew not why.

Mr. Henworth's approach prevented further conversation.

"I told you wrong it seems, Sir Herbert. Walker is still in England, and Johnston, who has just arrived, hints at a probable meeting between him and young Stephens, who considers his sister has been ill used."

"Good Heavens! If my worse than folly should cause death!" exclaimed the Baronet, turning pale. "Where are they to meet?"

"Of course nothing is known for certain, but probably at Merton Green, the duelling ground of this part of the county. Words passed between the young men today in the high street at S———, where Stephens is

staying with his aunt; and the meeting may take place to-morrow morning, or not at all."

"Then there is no time to lose. If man can prevent it, it shall be prevented."

"You can scarcely be in time."

"It must be attempted. By riding all night, and cutting across the country, I may reach Merton Green by six. Good bye, Miss Darrell! I am sure of your prayers for my success."

"Stop, Sir Herbert!" exclaimed Mrs. Banham and her youngest daughter, who, as well as Katharine, had overheard Mr. Hensworth's startling communication. "It is raining furiously, and the cross roads are dangerous. Pray send your servant with a letter."

"Send my servant with a letter!" he repeated indignantly, turning from them. "There is little danger; but were there more, my life is fairly forfeited for putting theirs in peril."

"Tell my servant to saddle Saladin as quick as possible: I shall be in the stable before he is ready," was his order to the footman he met in the hall, as he proceeded to his own apartment.

And he was in the stable as he had said, prepared for his ride, before Saladin was ready, though he had delayed to write a line of explanation to young Stephens, which his servant was to take to S——— by the regular road, and deliver with all speed, lest Merton Green should not be the place appointed.

Sir Herbert spared neither himself nor his good horse; but Merton Green was only reached as the distant village clock struck six. The storm had passed—the rain had ceased—and he could distinguish through the morning mist four figures busy with arrangements.

The pistols were in the hands of the combatants, as, springing from his jaded, stumbling horse, he rushed towards them. The signal was given, but ere either could fire Sir Herbert threw himself before young Stephens, covering him with his own person, whilst he dashed the weapon from his hand.

Walker's pistol went off in his surprise, and the ball passing through Sir Herbert's coat slightly grazed his side.

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired all the gentlemen at once.

"This is the meaning. Miss Stephens is worthy of your love, Walker; my tale was but a foolish jest," said the Baronet, scarcely able to stand from the fatigue he had undergone.

"A foolish jest. And you could play with my feelings? sport with my agony?" exclaimed the lover.

"A foolish jest! And to the discredit of my sister?" exclaimed the brother. "You must answer for this."

Sir Herbert's colour came and went.

"If you mean, Mr. Stephens, that, because I have wronged the sister by my folly I should seek the life of the brother, I tell you plainly that I will do no such thing. I have suffered too much during my hasty ride, from the dread of having blood on my hands unwittingly, to become a murderer wilfully. I will give any explanation—make any apology—publish any declaration, consistent with truth, to clear your sister:—not because you will demand it, but as a voluntary act of justice to Miss Stephens. When I have cleared her fame to her lover, her brother, and the whole world: when I have seen the lover and the brother shake hands as friends, as I trust I shall, I am ready to be shot at, if it so please you; but seek the life of either will I not: I have done too much wrong already. You may speak of me as you choose; I have done evil, and must bear the penalty; but be speedy in your questions, for I am faint with fatigue, and my head grows dizzy."

There was a moment's silence of surprise and doubt; then the lover held out his hand with broken but friendly words; and the brother took it with the same. They would then have questioned Sir Herbert, but Sir Herbert was unable to reply: his head grew more dizzy—his limbs, cramped by his long ride, could no longer support him—the blood welled gently out of the wound in his side; and he must have fallen but for the seconds, who,

less personally interested than the principals, and struck by the Baronet's noble frankness, had fixed their attention more earnestly upon him.

It was several days before Sir Herbert Eustace returned to Sallowfield; and even then he looked pale and ill, notwithstanding the nursing of the Stephenses', to whose house he had been taken, and who, delighted with his readiness to bear all blame himself, rather than suffer any to rest on others, would not permit him to depart till nearly restored to health. Even the lovers forgave all the misery he had caused them, and looked upon him as a friend. Here, too, he learned that Mr. Cooper had pursued and brought back his daughter; and the parent himself was scarcely more rejoiced at the event.

Loud and numerous were the congratulations and expressions of pleasure on his reappearance at Sallowfield. Katharine said the least, but her cordial shaking of the hand and the tears in her eyes were dearer to him than the words of all the rest. His pale cheek glowed—his dim eye danced in light;—but the cheek paled and the eye dimmed again before the evening closed. He saw Lord Ermiston pick up a flower that she had dropped, and, instead of returning it, place it in his bosom, bending over her with words so low that none beside could hear. He marked her as she listened to those few low words—and the pleasure of their meeting was destroyed.

CHAPTER VII.

"With lips that were silent, but blushes that spoke."
MOORE.

"ADIEU, *ma chère maman.* I am in a wild mood this morning, but will try and compose myself before I begin your sketch, which you must be sure and admire very much," cried the happy Katharine, flinging back a playful kiss of the hand to Mrs. Arnold as she left the room.

The grounds at Sallowfield were pretty, and her step was light and buoyant, yet timid too; and her colour came and went at the rustling of a leaf, or the flitting of a bird. She sat before the bridge that was to form the principal object in her sketch—arranged her drawing materials, and began to measure the distance with her eye; but gradually that eye marked less and less of the scene around:—the slight flurry in her manner passed away, and Kate sank into a deep but happy reverie. The rich notes of a blackbird on a neighbouring spray struck at length on her dulled ear;—her lips parted with a sunny smile; and when the woodland lay had ceased, the graceful girl took up the strain in a spirit of playful rivalry, after glancing round with a blush to assure herself that she was still alone.

The words and air were simple; but she gave them all the spell of feeling.

KATHARINE'S SONG.*

My dwelling is no lordly hall—
I rule no wide domain;
No bending servants wait my call,
No flatterers swell my train.
But roses twine around my home,
Bright smiles my presence greet;
The woodland wild is mine to roam—
Mine summer's odours sweet.

No costly diamonds deck my hair,
No cloth of gold have I;
But gorgeous robes and jewels rare.
Stay not the sad heart's sigh.
Those gems might bind an aching brow—
There is no pain in mine;—
Red gold might win a faithless vow,
And I be left to pine.

The echo of her clear, sweet tones had scarcely died away, ere blushing a deeper blush at her idle mood, and snatching up her pencil, she began to sketch with the resolute manner of one resolved to be no longer turned aside from her purpose by the wandering thoughts which had hitherto stayed her hand.

"You have chosen a good day for sketching, Miss Darrell," observed Sir Herbert Eustace, looking over that young lady's shoulder.

Katharine started, not having been aware of his presence; but made no reply, not being exactly pleased with his tone.

He took his seat beside her, and continued:

* Mr. Balfe has very successfully adapted this song to a charming melody.

"A very good day you have chosen; there is so much light and shade, just like life; it requires variety to make a picture interesting, and something the same in a character; uniformity in either borders on insipidity. Do you not think so?"

"Certainly; a picture without light and shade could only please a Chinese."

"And character—do you not agree with me in that, too?"

"The principle may be carried too far in morals:—deep shadows would be more pleasing in pictures than in characters;—but I am too much taken up with my sketch just at present to think of these things. Is the perspective of that bridge correct?"

The question changed his manner: he was pleased at this appeal for his advice, though doubtful whether it was not a woman's *ruse* to avoid an embarrassing subject.

"Not quite: that one stroke should be carried to the point of distance, not the point of sight. Yes, just so:—that is quite right now."

"Thank you: it is a great improvement."

"Would you but apply to me in all things, as you have done in this, I should be blest indeed."

Katharine continued her drawing in silence; but the tree on the paper did not bear much resemblance to that near the stream.

"Will you not apply to me thus?" he repeated.

"You would find me troublesome," she answered quickly.

"I should not find you troublesome; and you know it. Will you trust to me through life in weightier matters as you have done in this trifle?"

"No, no: I am growing into a woman now; and must learn to judge for myself."

"Yet you admit the correctness of my judgment?"

"In this drawing," she replied; too much flattered by his manner to know precisely what she said.

"And in nothing but this drawing?"

She was silent.

"How may I interpret this silence? Does it mean that you will rely on me in other points?"

"No—that is, not in all."

"Not in all!—In what will you trust me, then?"

She looked annoyed; but, after a short pause, answered playfully—

"I will not trouble you on any points; but try and walk alone:—the child is always so very proud of showing that it can dispense with leading strings."

"But when those leading strings are held by one who loves, and is beloved?"

"Some children are wayward; and prefer walking alone," she replied more gravely.

"Alone? Quite alone?" he questioned.

Her cheek crimsoned; and, vexed at his pertinacity, she spoke a little proudly:

"Of course: there is a great charm in independence."

"A greater in sincerity," he answered pointedly. "Man may revel in independence; but not woman:—gentle, confiding woman."

"You may be mistaken: we are not as fond of leading strings as you imagine."

"I am not mistaken: the difference rests in the holders of the leading strings, as you persist in calling them; remember, I gave not the name."

"Undoubtedly: if one cannot walk alone, the grand point is to choose one's guide; that privilege, at least, is accorded to poor, feeble woman."

"And I am not the guide you would select?"

"Not exactly."

"Not exactly!" he repeated with some warmth. "Why not say no at once; and add that the one whom who would select does not resemble me?"

"I did not wish to appear rude."

"Rude! I thank you for the consideration; but never again let a thought of my feelings check an honest answer. Perhaps you would favour me by describing the person of your choice? You do not speak:—are words too poor to tell his worth? Still silent! Shall I point him

out? Is not that the chosen guide—there—there, on that bridge?"

Katharine looked up:—Lord Ermiston was crossing the stream. She felt the Baronet's keen gaze upon her; and blushing and confused bent lower over her drawing.

"You make no answer. Surely Miss Darrell does not blush for her choice?"

"Miss Darrell blushes for Sir Herbert Eustace, who can thus pain a simple girl to please a wayward humour."

"Simple girl!" he repeated, but not so harshly as before, a little shamed by her rebuke. "I will not be so cruel as to compel an answer: I can interpret silence; and will spare your blushes.—So, in spite of all your promises, you place the Earl above the Baronet. You do wisely, and worldlings will applaud you; yet the time of repentance may come. He is not what you think him—he may not play the tyrant, but your warm heart will feel a chill. Now you love—hereafter you may despise:—he is the world's minion—the very slave of custom and of ridicule."

"If you will persist in seeking to entertain me, Sir Herbert Eustace, I must request you to select some more pleasing subject: I am no admirer of detraction, and your avowed enmity to your cousin unfits you to become his judge."

"Ha! what a proud glance and stately mien! And yet you would have me think you but a girl. Ermiston should be proud!—very proud!—for the first time in my life I would change with him. That woman said our hopes would cross—and they have crossed!—but they will scarce do so again. You have chosen, and will abide your choice. Good morning! I am no mean rival to interrupt a *tête-à-tête*."

He turned aside as he concluded, forcing his way through the interwoven boughs that crashed before him. In his wrath, there was a fierce pleasure in tramp-

ling upon something: he knew not till his cousin proved his successful rival how much that cousin was detested.

Katharine had not recovered her composure when Lord Ermiston joined her: perhaps his presence and his words did not lessen her confusion; yet she did not complain—she did not bid him depart—and when they crossed the lawn two hours afterwards, though her hand rested on his arm more lightly and more timidly than it had ever rested there before, and though her eyes were bent upon the ground, the spell of happiness was on her, and many wondered why she looked so beautiful.

Never had Sir Herbert been in higher spirits than on this evening: never had he raised louder laughs, or won more general applause. Mr. Bell stared, rebuked; then shook his head, and was silent; whilst Katharine, though thinking much of another, shrank from his almost boisterous mirth and the strange brightness in his eye. Miss Banham had too severe a headache to leave her room; and Lord Ermiston never quitted Katharine's side, except to converse with Mrs. Arnold.

"Dear child! how I rejoice in your hopes of happiness!" said Mrs. Arnold, as Katharine embraced her before retiring for the night. "Lord Ermiston is all I could desire. He stopped me at once when I would have told him how you came into my care, declaring that he knew all; and he has kindly, most kindly, promised that we shall be much together. I am so selfish, I could not bear to part with you entirely."

"You selfish! my dear, my more than mother! How can you say so? Why should we part?" throwing her arms around her. "We will all live together."

"No, Katharine, that cannot be. I know some little of the world, and will not risk your happiness by the attempt: but we may still be much together."

"Always together! I never thought of this:—we will not part. You have been more than mother—loving

me with more than a mother's love. No ! no ! I will not leave you," she exclaimed, clinging round her with a burst of tears.

"Hush! hush! you love Lord Ermiston!"

"Y—e—s:—but I love you, too. How shall I leave you? Will you not be sad when you have not your Kate, your own dear Kate, to smile upon and love?"

"I shall, indeed, dear child ; but still it must be so."

"No, it shall not be so. If he loves me, as he says, he will love you too, and not ask me to give up her who has nursed me from my childhood until now for one known but a few weeks."

Mrs. Arnold was deeply moved ; but she knew, as she said, too much of the world to yield to Kate's entreaties.

"Speak, Katharine ; you have never yet told me an untruth. Do you think years would make you love him more ?"

"I could not love him more," she said, hiding her blushes on the shoulder of her protectress. Mrs. Arnold smiled a chastened smile ; for she thought of her own young days, and of him who was in the grave.

"Should you love him less had he no rank or wealth ? Would you as readily share with him a lowly as a splendid lot ?"

"Dear mother, what have I said or done that you should ask me such a question? Can you think that I should prize him less if he were poor? And can you think I heed his title?"

"I do not think it, Katharine ; so you need not look reproachfully," said Mrs. Arnold, kissing her. "Yours is a simple mind and noble heart—you do not count as the world counts. Would that it might ever be the same ! Would that I could ever shield you from sorrow and deceit!"

"What do you mean, dear mother ? People tell me of the world as if it were a desert full of terrors, and wild beasts ; or worse, of cold and changing hearts ; and look at me and shake their heads, and talk of sor-

row;—yet I have ever been so happy. Where are these selfish beings of whom all complain? Every one is kind to Kate."

"I hope it will be ever so; or that a knowledge of what man can be may steal upon you with a gentle tread, not rush upon you with a shock. Yours is a sunny mind and grateful heart. You will strive to smile away your sorrows if they come; forget the evil done you, and double kindness by your gratitude."

"I cannot think of sorrow: I am so happy to be loved by you—and him:—and we will never part."

Mrs. Arnold shook her head.

"Only in name, then," kissing her fondly.

Mrs. Arnold yielded to the charm of her caresses; she saw that the grateful girl, whilst unconsciously possessed by a new and powerful feeling, had never contemplated a separation from the guardian of her childhood, and she would not pain her then by continuing the discussion, but bade her go to rest—to happy rest—with kisses and fond words.

And Kate's rest that night was happy—very happy;—not quite as calm as in her days of childhood, but, if broken—still her dreams were brighter. Her heart was not as peaceful as of old; but then it was a treasury of beautiful and precious things; rich hopes, and thoughts, and feelings, only needing order and arrangement:—time would bring these.

Happy! happy Kate! How long may all this last? How often will you sink to rest rich in such blissful hopes, the words of praise and gratitude upon your lips? How often will you rise to find those hopes fulfilled?

"Ask not! Ask not! Why raise the future's veil?
The sun must set—its glory must grow pale."—

"How is your headache, Maria?" asked Mrs. Banham, entering her daughter's room before she sought her own.

"Better, mamma. Did Lord Ermiston appear distressed?"

"I saw no symptom of distress," replied the mother drily.

"Perhaps not;—and particularly to you;—he has learnt to check and conceal emotion. How did he employ himself all the evening?"

"In playing the agreeable, I might almost say the lover, to Katharine Darrell," remarked her sister, entering the room at the moment, evidently in no happy mood.

"Psha! Charlotte, you never will see Lord Ermiston's regard for me, but persist in fancying lover-like *dévoirs* to Katharine, to get her out of the way of the Baronet."

"You may spare this pettishness, Maria, and rather blame your own blind vanity. If Charlotte saw lover-like attentions, she saw no more than the truth. Katharine Darrell is to be Lady Ermiston."

"That shall she not!" almost shouted Maria, forgetting in her anger, her usual suavity of tone and manner; springing from the bed, and standing before her mother with a look bordering upon frenzy.

"You need not look so strangely upon me, Maria: it is none of my doing;—I warned you of the danger."

"Yes, but it is your doing," she replied, stamping her delicate foot upon the floor. "To procure your darling son a rich wife, you have marred your daughter's fortunes; had the girl's real birth been known Lord Ermiston would not have thought of her. George will lose his bride:—that is some comfort!"

"A great comfort, certainly, to have all the children beggars as well as the parents," retorted Mrs. Banham, with kindling ire. "Pray, Charlotte, how are you getting on with the Baronet? There wants but that scheme to fail: and the ruin will be complete."

"Perhaps I, too, have to thank your partiality towards your son for the destruction of my hopes. I doubt if the girl, with all her pretended simplicity, has not

crossed me too; playing off the Baronet against the Earl, till she has secured the latter. He had taken more wine than usual to-night; or was in an extraordinary mood, though I believe few but myself guessed that his spirits were forced. He is evidently angry with Katharine, but I tried in vain to turn his pique to my profit. He has just declared his intention of returning to Eustace Park to-morrow, though I urged his stay. He talked of business, but I do not believe him. Others thought him paying me unusual attention; I knew better, and liked not his manner; but playing on his pique he may yet be mine;—many a hand is won through wounded vanity."

"Are you certain that Lord Ermiston is Katharine's lover?" asked Maria, willing to hear hope.

"He is her accepted lover, as I learn from Mrs. Arnold, who is of course delighted," replied Mrs. Banham.

"She shall not be his," exclaimed Maria. Her tone was lower than before, but still more resolved.

"She shall not be his!" repeated her mother with a calmer manner, but a mind as decided. "Till to-day I knew not the girl's real birth; it is even lower than I thought. Lord Ermiston, proud, sensitive, fastidious, will never brook the exposure with which a puppet, deeming herself a free agent, shall enlighten him. Mrs. Arnold believes him acquainted with the truth—I do not. His haughty mother will interfere should his own pride be bowed by love; and if he show but the slightest doubt or hesitation, my old friend and her pet beggar will free him from the engagement before he can request it."

"I doubt their being so scrupulous," remarked her eldest daughter.

"You judge all others like yourself, Maria; but Katharine Darrell does not resemble you."

If there was a sneer in the mother's words, quiet as was the tone, the daughter did not reply to it, and Mrs. Banham continued:—

"You must still treat the girl as a sister. Our wish for the union, after a disclosure of the truth, will appear more generous; and Mrs. Arnold must see the wisdom of the measure, whilst George will not object to her birth in consideration of her wealth."

"George object!" observed Charlotte contemptuously.

"You will do as I advise," observed the mother pointedly.

CHAPTER VIII.

"My daughter! oh my daughter!"
CAMPBELL.

HAPPY as had been her rest, Katharine rose early;—rose with the gladsome feeling of a young bird, that still, tended by a loving mother, cares not for the future, but joys without fear in its new acquirement of flying, skimming through the air with a fluttering delight unknown before.

Lord Ermiston, unloverlike, found fault with her sketch of the day before; and then, loverlike, persuaded her to let him escort her to the spot, that the mistake might be rectified. Katharine must have been very stupid that day, or his lordship must have been fastidious concerning the alteration; or both must have been otherwise employed—it was so long before the Earl and his fair companion prepared to return to the house.

There are some who maintain that no alteration had been made, the tree remaining as before ; but we shall not repeat the scandal, being very particular to discountenance any thing approaching to malice—as all gossips are.

Not walking against time, they had proceeded but a short distance on their return before they encountered nearly all the other visitors at Sallowfield, including some morning callers and Mrs. Arnold, and the Baronet, bent on a visit to a fancy cottage building on a common just without the grounds. Mrs. Banham so strongly urged their joining the party, that she might have the

benefit of his lordship's taste, that denial was out of the question.

"What can all those boys be shouting and laughing at?" asked one of the foremost of the walkers, pointing to a riotous group of children a little way in advance on the common.

"I fancy it must be the mad woman I met yesterday," replied Mr. Hensworth. "I wish you had been with me, Sir Herbert; you would have made a capital story out of her fantastic dress and ridiculous vanity, though you could not have been more amusing than you were last night. You seemed absolutely possessed with a wicked spirit of mirth and mischief, and I suppose are doing repentance to-day, for you are as dull as an owl at noon."

"My feverish mood last night was no good sign. I find I have not recovered from the effects of my late attack; and must be more prudent," replied the Baronet, skilfully hiding any appearance of vexation at the remark.

"You do look ill, I must say. Oh! here comes the crazy woman with her court, as she calls the shouting children. Now we shall have capital fun!"

"Talking of crazy women, who was your mother, Miss Darrell?" asked the very curious and candid Mrs. Bampton.

"*A-propos* of bread," remarked Mr. Hensworth with a laugh, in which several joined, so singular and abrupt appeared the question.

If Mrs. Bampton had intended to confuse and annoy her to whom she spoke, and such was generally supposed to be the reason of her plain questions, she certainly only accomplished her purpose in a very minor degree, as far as Katharine was concerned:—startled and surprised she was, but, at the moment, nothing more. So many years had passed since she had seen her real mother, of whom she had but a slight recollection; and she had so long been accustomed to consider Mrs. Arnold in that light, that she was on the point of answering the question as if put in reference to her, without

considering the folly of so doing, that lady herself being present, and well known to Mrs. Bampton, when a second question changed her intended reply.

"Who was your real mother, I mean,—not Mrs. Arnold ; I know she took you out of charity."

"I have no mother ; she has been dead many years."

"But what was she when she was alive ? I ask."

It was then, that in her difficulty to frame an answer, Katharine first began to comprehend the annoyance of the question. Mrs. Arnold had understood it from the first, and pale and trembling looked from her favourite to Lord Ermiston, on whose arm she was leaning. Yet even now Kate did not fully apprehend all, or even a small portion of what that question might bring upon her : she did not distinctly know what her mother had been, Mrs. Arnold having always avoided the subject ; whilst her seclusion had not only saved her from unfeeling taunts, which she might have encountered had she mingled with other children ; but had also prevented her forming a proper estimate of what would be the opinion of the world were all the circumstances of her birth revealed. She felt some little awkwardness at admitting her mother's lowly station, a few gleams of worldly knowledge having broken in upon her since her residence at Sallowfield ; but her principal objection to answering the question was the fear of displeasing her protectress, remembering her request the night before their departure from Beechen Cliff. She looked to Mrs. Arnold before she replied, and, observing her vexation, answered less openly than she might otherwise have done, thus giving many reasons to think that she was anxious to deceive, and among this number Lord Ermiston, who was not aware that she believed him acquainted with every particular.

"I was so very young, when I last saw my mother, that I can scarcely recal her to my mind ; and only know how much, how very much I owe dear Mrs. Arnold."

Her look of gratitude as she turned towards that lady was so beautiful, so touching, that Lord Ermiston forgot for a moment the mortification which Mrs. Bampton's

question had occasioned him. What was your mother? was not the question he could have desired asked of the future Lady Ermiston:—but he had far ruder shocks to sustain.

"If you do not remember her looks, Miss Darrell, I suppose you can tell whether she was a crazy gipsy pauper, as the story goes. I ask that I may contradict the report."

Mrs. Arnold marked the Earl's start and changing cheek; and feared for her darling's happiness. If he knew all, as he had said, why that start? But then Katharine had started too at such a very candid statement of a disagreeable fact, which had certainly not been glossed to suit the taste of the fastidious.

"Katharine knows nothing of her mother, not having seen her since she was seven years old," interposed Mrs. Arnold, before her favourite could reply.

"But you know all about her, I suppose."

"I never saw her mother but once: she has been long dead."

"Very likely: but was her mother called crazy Nan?" demanded the pertinacious Mrs. Bampton.

"Who says Nan Darrell is crazy? She is no more crazy than yourself," exclaimed a voice, startling from its singular tone.

All turned to gaze on the speaker.—It was the attraction of the noisy children, who had approached unremarked, the attention of the party having been taken up with Mrs. Bampton's questions:—it was the crazy woman whom Mr. Hensworth had seen the day before, and from whom he anticipated such fun:—it was Nan Darrell herself! recognized on the instant by Mrs. Arnold, though not by Kate.

"Nan Darrell, and alive! My poor Katharine!" exclaimed Mrs. Arnold, trembling for her favourite's fate, and too much overcome by the woman's sudden appearance to think of the most prudent course to be pursued.

"Nan Darrell alive? To be sure! Who said she was dead? Oh, is that you? I know you now, ma'am,"

cried the crazy creature, dropping courtesy after courtesy with a manner so singularly ridiculous ; such an extraordinary compound of humility, assumed dignity, and self conceit, holding out her parti-coloured gown as she did so, that even Mrs. Arnold, amid all her distress, could hardly suppress a smile, whilst the laughs of some of the Sallowfield guests were audible ; and the mirth of the children, who had followed in her train, became uproarious.

"What are you all laughing at ?" questioned the poor creature angrily, yet with a ludicrous assumption of dignity, which she rarely forgot. "Did you never see one lady courtesy to another, before ? Learn manners from me. And how do you do, ma'am ?" speaking to Mrs. Arnold. "I have not seen you a long time, and was thinking of paying you a visit. See, I have put on a handsome dress on purpose, hearing that Kate was going to be married. A handsome gown you see," she continued, spreading out her dress, a flaring red and yellow calico, not over clean, and turning round with the most self satisfied air.

A shout of laughter followed this display of her finery, which she endeavoued to hush by an angry wave of the hand.

"So you thought I was dead. No, no : Nan Darrell can't die yet ; not till her child is a lady," affecting a mysterious whisper. "But where is Kate ? I want to congratulate her as we grand people say. Which is little Kate of all these pretty ladies ?"

Involuntarily all the rest drew back, leaving Katharine foremost ; who pale, trembling, and shrinking from her crazy mother's silly vanity and frenzied look, clung to Lord Ermiston for support, a support scarcely granted, yet not quite withheld ; though every fresh display of his intended mother-in-law's folly, and the succeeding merriment, were mental tortures which he could ill endure. At that very moment, with that fair and fragile being clinging to him in the full, undoubting confidence of a first attachment, he thought not of her

misery, but only of the ridicule to which he should be subjected.

"Is that woman really your mother?" he demanded almost sternly.

"I believe so," faltered Katharine, still clinging to him.

He accused her in his own heart of deception:—he would have withdrawn his arm and retired from a scene so painful to his sensitive pride; but, without understanding his feelings, she looked up in his face, with a trusting, yet pleading glance, which he could not quite resist. He still let her cling to his arm; but he looked stern and proud the while, with his teeth set, and his cheek pale, speaking no word of consolation or endearment.

"Her mother? To be sure I am Kate's mother. Who says I am not?" cried crazy Nan, dancing up to his lordship, who drew back in disgust. "So you are the great lord who is to marry Kate. Well, you are a fine, grand man," she continued, eyeing him from head to foot: "and a handsome one—look like a king:—but what an ugly waistcoat! So dull! Why don't you have one like this?" holding out her gown. "I will give you one just like it the day you marry Kate," sidling closer to him; "but you must look better tempered: you seem sulky now."

Lord Ermiston stamped his foot, and half withdrew his arm from the clinging Kate: rarely had his features exhibited such an expression of rage, as when an almost universal shout of laughter at the crazy woman's patronising manner met his ear.

Poor Katharine saw his stamp, and felt the half withdrawal of his arm. She raised her drooping head and looked up in his face:—for one moment only did she look upon him, yet, brief as was that look, the colour passed even from her lips as she gazed:—a slight shiver shook her frame—her head drooped again, and her hands, unclasping his arm, slowly and sadly sank by her side. She did not upbraid by look or word—she did

not even turn away; but she left him free to leave her: —she did not ask his pity, save by her pallid cheek and gentle submission to his will. He could not see her thus unmoved;—but he stood irresolute, half turned away, looking on the ground in silence.

Nan Darrell saw not this desertion of her daughter, it not being sufficiently marked to attract her attention, and continued her wild talk, inflicting at every word a deeper pang.

"You will soon be a lady, Kate. I always said you would:—and you ought to be, though James said you should not. But I knew it would be: my mother could tell fortunes, and she told it. You will be a great lady, and ride in a coach, and wear a fine dress like mine. And I am a lady, too—a lady in my own light—so I'll teach you how to behave. Mind now, do as I do:" spreading out her gown, and tossing her head; "but don't be familiar with the people—keep yourself up. I'll be sure to be at your wedding; but you must have a gay dress like mine. I'll send you one; and a hat the same as this," pointing to her own blue and yellow bonnet with a pink feather. "Always dress smart as I do, and then the people will follow you. How white and ill you look, poor child; not half so pretty as you used to do; but perhaps ladies should look so. You must be married soon, for I am going away: I am wanted; but I'll see you a lady first. Mother said I should die then —and sometimes I think so, too," she added with a sad and mysterious look. Then, resuming her folly, she continued; "You shall have a long train, and I'll hold it—but no—ain't I a lady, too?"

"She is fainting:—she cannot endure this trial:—it will kill her! Will you still be her protector? or do you desert her in her agony, and leave her to my care?" asked Sir Herbert Eustace of his cousin, in a tone too low for other ears, occupied in listening to the crazy ravings of Nan Darrell.

Starting at the appeal, Lord Ermiston looked keenly at his cousin, whose words and manner confirmed a

suspicion which had once before been awakened. He made no reply, but turned irresolute to Katharine ;—he saw her sinking to the earth—and was decided.

His arm was round her ere she fell ; all but his love was forgotten : " Katharine ! dear Katharine !" he exclaimed, alarmed at her deathly look.

The drooping lids were half unclosed—the lips moved ; a low, soft sound was heard, sweet to a lover's ears—they were the look and tones of grateful, trusting affection:—all her doubts were gone—he was unchanged!

The eyelids drooped again, and the lips closed ; but the features no longer wore a look of pain.

" Take her to that cottage, Ermiston," said Sir Herbert abruptly.

The Earl bore her towards the house, followed by Mrs. Arnold and the Banhams, whilst the Baronet hurried on before to prepare the owner for the visit : and then dispersed the women and children who had crowded round poor crazy Nan.

" You had better leave Miss Darrell to our care ; we women are used to fainting fits, and your presence on her first recovery might agitate her," observed Miss Banham to Lord Ermiston, motioning him to retire, after he had placed Katharine in a large chair in an inner room.

His lordship hesitated an instant, then moved towards the door.

The Baronet caught Miss Banham's eye as his cousin retired ; and the colour rose and paled on her cheek as she turned away, busying herself in a hurried manner about the still insensible Katharine.

" Leave her not !" said Sir Herbert, " this is no common moment :—now is the time to prove yourself worthy of her regard."

The Earl paused at the low, earnest whisper :—he even made a step in return, though galled at receiving advice from one whose generous conduct was a rebuke to his own selfish vacillation ; but at that moment came the voice of crazy Nan from without, boasting of her

daughter being a lady, and the laugh which followed ; —his cheek flushed at the sound ;—and he left the room with a haughty step, not looking at his cousin as he passed.

Mrs. Arnold's distress and agitation had hitherto prevented her taking a part in the painful scene : and even now, as she assisted in restoring the sufferer, her tears fell, and her hand shook ; she foresaw sorrow for her darling, and blamed herself as the cause.

"Will you keep that unhappy woman out of hearing till Katharine shall be quite recovered ?" was her earnest request to Sir Herbert, who leant against the door-way.

"Why do you ask me ? Ermiston should do that—she has chosen him," replied the Baronet bitterly, rousing himself from the reverie into which he had fallen.

Mrs. Arnold drew back, pained and abashed.

"Forgive me ! What would you ?" said Sir Herbert, repenting his harshness.

"I would have you act as towards a sister, as you once said."

"Sister !" repeated the Baronet almost fiercely.

"Poor Katharine ! she will have much to bear, and she is young and gentle. Do not despise her ? I only am to blame," pleaded Mrs. Arnold, unconscious of the pain she was inflicting, and concluding him only disgusted at her parentage.

"You are right !—she is young and gentle—and will have much to bear. I will do all I can ; and do not you leave her."

And he did all he could : keeping away a crowd ; quieting crazy Nan ; nay, even saving his cousin any fresh shock to his sensitive pride, though wild passions were raging in his own heart all the while.

Katharine's first act when restored to consciousness was to cast a keen yet hurried glance around. The one she looked for was not there, and she sank back disappointed; whilst Mrs. Arnold's face was turned away.

"He is not here, love; though not far off. I dare

say he thought you might feel awkward in his presence, without some explanation," whispered Maria in the most endearing tone.

A crimson flush came upon the pale cheek of the poor girl. One look, one word of his, would have given her back life and strength as they had done before; but he was not there to smile upon, to speak to her. "He thought she might feel awkward in his presence without an explanation," she repeated to herself. Did he not love her, then? did he despise her? She spoke not, but covered her face with her hands that none might look upon her.

"My poor child!" said Mrs. Arnold almost timidly, fearing lest the sufferer might have some feeling like reproach towards herself, for having by her very doting love and care but made her a fitter mark for sorrow.

She injured Katharine by the thought.

"Dear mother,—more than mother! You will not love me less!" was the passionate exclamation of her favourite, followed by a gush of tears, as she clung fondly round her.

"No, no; dear child! I only love you more."

"Lord Ermiston hopes Miss Darrell is better," said Miss Banham, returning from the outer room.

"Miss Darrell is better, and thanks Lord Ermiston for his inquiries," replied the weeper, gazing for a moment on the messenger with a wild keenness that made her shrink: then the face sank again on Mrs. Arnold's shoulder, with a still more passionate burst of grief.

"Poor child! he does not deserve her;—to desert her at such a moment!" whispered Mrs. Banham to her daughter in the most compassionate of tones, and with the most compassionate of looks.

But, though a whisper, the weeper heard it; and a wilder clinging to Mrs. Arnold proved that she had.

"Take me away! Take me home, dear mother," murmured the sufferer.

"Dear girl; I will send for the carriage," said Mrs.

Banham, kissing Katharine's bowed neck as she passed to give her orders.

There was no need of orders, Mrs. Arnold's carriage was at the cottage door. Sir Herbert aware that it was waiting for its mistress on the other side of the common, had got rid of the riotous children by sending them thither to order its approach with a promise of reward on condition of their remaining away from the cottage; and had, moreover, persuaded nearly all the others of the party to proceed on their walk that Katharine might be spared the encountering curious eyes; so that only his cousin, himself, and the pertinacious Mrs. Bampton, were in the outer room when Mrs. Banham entered ; the candid lady ready to see and say any thing—the Earl seated in a gloomy corner in no enviable state of mind. Crazy Nan was talking to Mr. Hensworth and some others beyond earshot of those in the cottage; and the kind dame herself, with two chubby children, was bustling about in the back kitchen, with an occasional word of condolence to the Earl, much to his annoyance, on the pale looks of the young lady and the vagaries of the crazy woman.

"Your carriage is at the door," said Mrs. Banham, returning to the inner room, and omitting to state from ignorance, thoughtlessness, or intention, who had procured its attendance.

"Will you go now, or wait a little, dear Katharine ?" asked Mrs. Banham with the most soothing manner.

"Now, now, thank you ! I am quite ready ?" rising as she spoke, though still clinging to Mrs. Arnold for support.

Maria tied on her bonnet—Charlotte put on her shawl, with endearing looks and words—none could have been kinder.

By an involuntary impulse Sir Herbert stepped forward to assist the invalid as soon as the opened door showed her slowly advancing, supported by Mrs. Arnold and Mrs. Banham ; but he checked himself abruptly, turning to his cousin, who had risen, yet seemed undecided as to offering his aid.

Poor Katharine ! she felt that she was in the presence of him who had so lately won her to admit her regard by his own repeated vows of never changing love. She dared not look up, as unable from emotion to proceed, she paused for an instant :—no hurried step approached ; no gentle tones were asking of her health.

"Are you a man, Ermiston ? Do you love her, and can you see her thus unmoved ? At least, you will hand her to the carriage," said his cousin in a tone so very low that no other heard it.

"Oh, certainly ! you would make an excellent master of the ceremonies," replied the Earl in a voice as low as the remark.

The Baronet bit his lip to prevent the outbreaking of his wrath and contempt, whilst the Earl advanced to Katharine.

However his lordship's pride might have been wounded by finding that he had bestowed his affections on and proffered his hand to the daughter of a crazy pauper, as Mrs. Bampton had designated Nan Darrell, as well as by a self-conviction of inferiority to his detested cousin, he could not stand by the side of the trembling Katharine and speak coldly or harshly. Her hasty glance as he advanced had such a touching mingling of orrow and affection, that the rule of love was re-established ; and she clung to his arm for support, after listening to his broken words of fondness and regret, with the confiding feelings of the morning. She was no longer miserable—he loved her still !

"Perhaps I had better get into the carriage first to assist dear Katharine," observed Mrs. Banham, to whose office of supporter Lord Ermiston had succeeded.

Mrs. Banham did so, helping in the invalid most tenderly ; of course Mrs. Arnold followed ; and a chariot could hold no more.

"I will take care of the dear girl ; a little rest and quiet will do wonders ; in the mean time, I must leave Maria and Charlotte to your lordship's charge," said Mrs. Banham, leaning forward in the carriage with her peculiar smile, which was so peculiarly pleasing.

"Of course Ermiston would prefer accompanying the carriage; so I will take care of the young ladies," observed the Baronet quickly.

"Thank you!" said the Earl in a more friendly tone, mounting the box as he spoke.

Perhaps his lordship's gratitude was all the greater from marking the approach of crazy Nan, who came dancing up, shouting in shrill tones—"Good bye, Kate! Good bye, my lord! I'll be sure to be at the wedding, and bring the waistcoat and the gown, just like mine;" making quick succeeding courtesies as she spoke.

"Drive on!" cried the Earl imperiously;—and the carriage drove on, whilst the poor crazy creature kissed her hand as a lady should, she said.

The most feeling might have pardoned a smile at the idea of such a mother-in-law for the proud, the elegant, the sensitive Lord Ermiston!—one of the most graceful and fastidious men of his day. Think of such a woman calling him son! Think of her being at his wedding, and presenting him with a red and yellow waistcoat like her own flaunting gown.

CHAPTER IX.

"I love! and shall I leave her."

Lord Ermiston supported Katharine to her room: —bade her be careful of herself; and hoped a little rest and quiet would quite restore her.

She had no right to quarrel with his words—but his manner: she did not quarrel with that either; but she wept—wept bitterly, when his retreating step was no longer heard.

"My child? my poor child!" said Mrs. Arnold, hanging fondly over her.

Katharine shuddered at those tones so pitying and so loving;—they told her that what she feared to think upon was more than suspected by another. She struggled with her tears, and stayed them enough to speak:—

"Mother! dear mother! will you go to him—will you say that he is not bound—that he is free, if he wish it? I seek but his happiness."

Her words were broken by sobs; and she hid her face on the pillow when she ceased speaking.

"My good! my noble child! I will go as you bid me. May he prove worthy of your affection! Can you forgive me for this cruel trial? I knew not that that woman lived, and I fear too readily believed his assertion that he knew all."

"Forgive? I who owe you all? I do but cling more fondly to your love. You will not throw me off?"

"Never! Katharine never!"

"I knew it:—and now go."

She went:—but Katharine recalled her before she had reached the door, holding both her hands in her's while she spoke.

"Now, dear mother, you must promise that you will say no more for me, than you would say if speaking of yourself. I feel you think he wishes to be free:—tell him that he is so:—but oh, tell him kindly, gently! Plead not—persuade not. If he yielded, but not through love, I should know it—I should feel it; and my heart would break beneath the shame. I could not be deceived; and I should pine away until I left him free. Will you promise?"

"I will, whatever it may cost me. Now, be calm:" kissing her crimson cheek that paled upon the instant. "Do you seek rest."

"Rest!" murmured Katharine sadly, as her head sank back upon the pillow.

When Mrs. Arnold entered the drawing room she found her hostess playing the consoler to Lord Ermiston; but judging from his looks the effect did little credit to her consoling powers.

"I make no excuse to you, Eliza; I would speak with the Earl alone," said Mrs. Arnold with the simple straightforwardness of her nature.

"Certainly," replied her old friend kindly, leaving the room on the instant.

"I hope Miss Darrell is better," observed his lordship, breaking the embarrassing silence that ensued.

"She is better," replied Mrs. Arnold rather coldly, for his tones were not the tones of a lover. "It is of her that I would speak."

The Earl bowed slightly, and she continued:

"My surprise at that unhappy woman's appearance was scarcely less than your own, having for many years believed her dead."

"With this difference, Mrs. Arnold: I knew not such a person had ever existed, whilst to you she was no stranger."

There was so much rebuke in his words and manner that Mrs. Arnold wondered at his increase of coldness, considering that he had suffered no fresh annoyance since they had parted, but had on the contrary met with kind consolation from the warm-hearted and friendly Mrs. Banham. She felt hurt at his implied suspicion of her sincerity; but answered kindly for her favourite's sake.

"I certainly saw Nan Darrell once, but only once; and from your own words concluded your knowledge of Katharine's parentage to be equal to mine in every point, but a personal acquaintance with her mother."

"You misunderstood me. I only knew, or rather had heard the general report, that Miss Darrell was the daughter of an old and scantily provided friend. Had I known the truth, my conduct might—would have been different. There was prudence in the concealment."

"There was affection in the concealment, Lord Ermiston;—for the prudence I will not answer: but all the blame attaching to this silence, and that you do blame it I cannot doubt, must rest solely upon me. Katharine Darrell is too grateful, too affectionate, not to have blazoned the story, as far as she herself was acquainted with it, but for my particular request to the contrary. You look incredulous:—you may doubt me—you should not doubt her. I fear I have acted most unwisely for my child's happiness: but she deserves no censure, and must receive none. She was but seven years of age when I found her in a retired hamlet, the victim of a village fury. Struck with her natural elegance, and the patience she displayed, I interfered to save her from the anger to which I had subjected her. The poor child clung to me for protection—looked to me as a friend:—I fancied a resemblance to my lost daughter—and resolved to snatch her from the unhappy fate which threatened her;—and her mother yielded her to my care, resigning all her claims. Unwilling to subject her to the bitter pangs endured by those educated above their sta-

tions, I resolved to fit her only for a menial situation. Better for her had I kept my resolution :—but may I not be pardoned—and by a lover, if I failed? You know her !—could you—would you class her with menials? I speak not of her beauty; that is doubtless nothing save in the doting eyes of those who love her as myself; —I speak not of the natural elegance, which was her's even as a village child in rags :—I speak not of these,— I ask you not to think of them,—but I do ask you to think of her affectionate and grateful heart, her generous temper, her intelligent mind, and endearing manners. You have not withstood the witchery of all these, how then should I, to whom they were displayed more warmly and more openly? She had won from me the affection of a mother—she had gained instruction, that unfitted her for the station to which I had destined her, drinking in knowledge with a thirsting ear, before I was aware of the fact. I thought—I was willing to think that I had then advanced too far to retreat in common humanity to herself. I had already given her refinement above her birth,—I could not force the stream of knowledge and experience to flow backward. Could I crush that young, warm heart, throwing it back, with the delicate tastes and the knowledge I had given, into a companionship with the rude, the unlettered, and the ignorant? Could I bid her be a menial, whom I had fitted for the highest station? I could not do this. I might have been imprudent—I might thus have perilled her future happiness; but this would have been instant cruelty—it would have destroyed her present peace. I heard of her mother's death, attested, proved, they said: she was an orphan, with none to link her to that station whence I took her. She had no recollection of that mother which could pain her ;—with no companion but myself she had no taunt to tell her what she had once been :—my retired life had prevented the real circumstances of her birth from being generally known, when I had first adopted her; and why should they be blazoned now to those who had no right to question or to know? I knew what the worldly would say.—Why

subject her and myself to the sarcasms of the unfeeling? Such was my thought when, yielding to the entreaties of my friend, I consented to visit Sallowfield. I may have erred in this—I fear I have. There is but one excuse—will you, my lord, deny me that? I loved her! Could I then pain her myself, or subject her to pain from others without a compelling reason? She had become to me as a dear child;—at times, I forgot that she was not really such. Can you not pardon a mother's doting love for Katharine Darrell? Nor was it I alone who loved her. It has been said that favourites have no friends—she has no enemies. The very persons who might naturally have envied her exaltation were the first to sanction it, and treat her with respect. The two old servants who had been with me, when I first saw her, of themselves determined to be silent on her birth. Is not that a proud memorial of her worth? Yet mistake me not; this silence was not to be maintained towards him, who, loving my child, should seek her for his bride. I could give her fortune—and I would;—she had no near relation to blush for; so at least I thought. And should lowly birth, unknown to any but the one who loved her, bar her from a union equal to her worth?

"Your lordship's manner was so guarded that I scarcely guessed your wishes till told of them by yourself. I would then have revealed the truth—you said you knew it; and I let it pass, perhaps too easily. I sought not the union,—my poor child sought it not;—I wished not so high a station; yet when you asked her of me I could not but feel proud. I know not how the secret of her birth has been revealed: I know not how that unhappy woman was preserved; but both have come to pass; and there can be no further secrecy. I have said, and I repeat it, I can give fortune to my adopted child sufficient to excuse the worldly to the worldly; but him she loves—to whom she gives her hand, should prize her for her worth alone;—should shrink not from the worldling's sneer, but should have strength of mind to shield her from the sarcasm of the

unfeeling. Thus far have I spoken for myself: I know not if your lordship would still blame me."

"I blame you not!" replied the Earl, touched by her gentle earnestness and faltering tone, though his cheek flushed at her concluding words. Was he above the worldling's sneer?

"My lord, I thank you. And now I would do Katharine's bidding."

Lord Ermiston only bowed his acquiescence; and Mrs. Arnold fancied that he feared more than he desired to hear her message. She paused a moment, trying to steady her voice; but the voice would not be steadied; and the tears would fall as she proceeded:—

"Her mother's coming may have wrought some change upon your lordship's feelings;—if so, she bade me say, and I must pray you to believe she spoke in love and sadness, not in anger;—if so, she bade me say that you are free! bound by no word that you have spoken! She saw my grief, and added:—'Go tell him this:—plead not—persuade not:—heed not my tears. If he felt bound by honour, not by love, I should soon know it—feel it:—and should pine to death beneath the shame. I only seek his happiness!' Such are the words of Katharine Darrell—such are mine. I love her:—I would give tears for her tears—life for her life—yet will I ask no pity. She loves you—she has told you so:—but you are free: free in honour:—free to choose;—bound by no word!" She paused, looking up in his face for a reply; he could not meet that look.

"I was not prepared for this," he said, in a voice scarcely steadier than her own, turning away abruptly.

Mrs. Arnold felt that her darling's fate hung on a thread: she was anxious for a decision:—she grieved that the decision was not instant; but she spoke not;—and her companion, harassed by contending feelings, did not break the silence.

Steps approached: Lord Ermiston started, advanced hastily to Mrs. Arnold, and addressed her in a husky voice:

"I respect you—I love and admire her:—give me a little time to decide. You shall know to-night."

"As you will," said Mrs. Arnold; but she sighed as she said it, and he understood the sigh, though he made no remark; hastily quitting the room by an opposite door to that by which others were approaching.

Neither Katharine or Mrs. Arnold appeared at dinner, which had been ordered early, to give longer time for a rambling excursion in the evening; nor was the meal lingered over; for Mrs. Banham and her daughters were scarcely as brilliant as usual, whilst Lord Ermiston rarely spoke, and Sir Herbert Eustace, who was to depart before night, said little save in sudden bursts.

The rambling party had set off—Mrs. Banham had gone to comfort Mrs. Arnold; and Lord Ermiston was sitting alone in the library, leaning back in an easy chair, his generally tranquil features working with the mind's emotion, when Sir Herbert entered the room, professedly to look for a book. For some time he was, or choose to appear employed in the search; but his glance frequently wandered to his cousin, whom he at last approached abruptly. The Earl looked up for a moment, but paid no further heed to his presence.

"Hear me, Ermiston!" said the Baronet, speaking with earnestness which compelled attention. "We are not friends—and we know it, let the world say what it may. I should hardly step from my path to serve you, but I feel for her; and you cannot doubt the disinterestedness of my advice. You have been listening to the serpent tongues of Mrs. Banham and her daughter, who would have you for their victim:—Why listen to any but your own heart? You love—you are beloved! and monarchs might be proud of the regard of Katharine Darrell. Grieve her not by pausing;—shame her not by doubting. Prove yourself worthy of her love! Stand boldly forth as her protector, and hush sneers and sarcasms by braving them."

"Lady Ermiston should be one on whom none could venture sneer or sarcasm," replied his lordship, little pleased at the interference.

"Lord Ermiston should be above them!" said his cousin, with something like contempt.

"Lord Ermiston is not so great a philosopher as Sir Herbert Eustace. If he heed not a mad and vulgar mother-in-law, let him take the lady himself; she may do for a Baronet, though not fitting bride for an Earl; and if she cannot be a Countess, her protectress may submit to her being something less."

"Shame! Shame, Ermiston! to think—to speak thus of Katharine Darrell and her generous protectress. I should despise you more than I do, but that you are ruled by anger—like not my meddling—and have been galled and goaded by the Banhams. You deserve her not!"

"Permit me to yield her to my more worthy cousin, then: no doubt, she will consent to the transfer."

Sir Herbert's wrath rose, and the cousins stood looking fiercely at each other for a moment; then the Earl turned away, and the Baronet paced the room; but again stopped abruptly before the taunter.

"I defy your taunts! you feel your own meanness, even whilst you yield to it; and despise yourself more than I despise you. You know that Janet's words have come to pass—you know that you have crossed my love—and you know, too, that you have triumphed in this crossing:—my defeat has enhanced the glory of your victory. I did—I do love Katharine Darrell; with a strength I guessed not, till I learned she loved another; but not to possess her love, would I, Herbert Eustace, become Earl of Ermiston, who has happiness within his grasp, and will not take it because worldlings smile!—who has won a young, warm heart, rich in worth, and now would crush the gentle heart he won! Mark me!" laying his hand on his arm, "Mark me! if I thought only of myself, I would give half my fortune that Katharine Darrell should wed any other than Lord Ermiston;—that barbed the arrow!—but I could not look upon her silent agony, and think of my own selfish hopes. And if I, a rejected wooer, rejected for the man I almost hate, if I could not see her thus un-

moved, what then should he have felt for whom I was rejected? I plead for her against myself. Be you worthy of her! quit you like a man—an honourable man!—despise the insinuations of deceit—the mocks of folly! soothe her, who loves you—protect her, who clings to you! Do this, and I forgive you all; nay, I offer you this hand in friendship. I should admire and envy then as I despise you now; for you would have vanquished the weakness of long years—and proved yourself a conqueror indeed!"

The Earl had not heard this generous appeal unmoved; but he felt irritated by a sense of his own weakness; and, do what he would to shut out the vision, crazy Nan was ever before his eyes with her ludicrous fancies, and the shouts of laughter succeeding their display. The memory alone was torture to his sensitive pride. Of a less firm and energetic character than his cousin, if not as often led into open acts of wrong, he was deficient in his ready frankness to confess and to repair. He was touched—he was half convinced; for, in spite of his taunts, he still loved; but he could not resolve at once to act the generous part.

"I believe you disinterested," he answered, with a coldness and embarrassment which contrasted strongly with the Baronet's open warmth. "I would do much for Katharine's sake:—but her mother! Setting aside all else: think of her madness! I should tremble at every quicker glance. And have I a right to risk the entailing such a doom on future generations?"

"I might admit the force of this argument if urged by another," replied the Baronet after a moment's pause, and in a calmer tone: "but you have not held madness an objection before; witness Mrs. Morven's negociation for the hand of the great northern heiress. Her mother's station and vulgarity might in prudence have checked an attachment—but can it—should it destroy it when formed? Why visit on the gentle and confiding Katharine the misfortunes of her parent? She had not done so to you had you changed places."

"Perhaps not; but she is a woman; a simple, loving woman!"

"That very admission shames our manhood worse than a thousand crimes. Can the weak alone be generous?—must the strong be selfish? You love her, as I never thought that you could love, guard, protect her. That woman can be provided for at a distance. Show the world that you are proud of your wife, and that world will prate of her worth; there is no coward like the world: and only greater cowards are its slaves. Go to her—look upon her—listen to her—then leave her, if you can."

"This is strange advice from you," remarked his lordship, no longer contending against that advice, the though of Katharine's merits having again conquered pride.

"What then? I am a strange person! no one wonders at my acts," replied the Baronet, attempting careless gaiety. The attempt was a failure—the lips quivered and the voice faltered.

He had, indeed, pleaded for Katharine against himself; and now he felt the misery of conquest—nay, almost regretted the victory he had achieved. Yet she could never be other to him than at that moment;—he was not one to be second to any in love, least of all to Ermiston. He strode to the door, but turning round before he left the room, said emphatically, "Go to her at once; and heed not the Banhams."

The Earl stood for some moments pondering on the words of his cousin, then proceeded to follow his advice: but before he had announced his intentions to Mrs. Arnold, the Baronet was on his way to Eustace Park, endeavouring to outride thought.

Mrs. Arnold smiled through her tears as the Earl declared his love to be unchanged; neither hinting a reproach at the delay, nor making any observation on —his still rather embarrassed manner. And Katharine, what did she say—when acquainted with his wishes?"

"I knew he was kind and generous! How shall I

repay him?" was her exclamation, hiding her blushes on Mrs. Arnold's shoulder.

If Lord Ermiston had any return of his former doubts, and irresolution, during Mrs. Arnold's absence, they vanished the moment Katharine entered that lady's dressing room, with a light, yet timid step, the eyes bent upon the ground, the cheek changing from white to red; from red to white. Her victory was complete.

"Katharine! dear Katharine!" he exclaimed, springing to her side, whilst she still clung to Mrs. Arnold's arm. These few words were enough?—she felt that she was beloved, and asked not—doubted not. There was nothing but joy in the present:—nothing but joy in the future.

Mrs. Arnold lingered a few moments to give her time to recover from her first confusion, then rose to leave the room; but before she could quit it at one door an unexpected and unwelcome visitor entered it at the other. All had been too much occupied by their own thoughts and feelings to note an unusual bustle in the house, or to hear the peremptory order of a haughty voice, "Show me to Lord Ermiston, wherever he may be:" and not till his lordship started from his seat, with the exclamation of "My mother!" were either aware that the proud Mrs. Morven was in the house.

"Yes, your mother! Lord Ermiston: and she must speak with you on the instant, and in private," she said, after scanning the two ladies, who shrank from her keen and haughty look.

Mrs. Arnold and Katharine rose to leave the mother and her son to the privacy desired; the former, at least thinking that the stately bearing of the parent, and the troubled and embarrassed look of the child, boded no happy future.

"Stay, Mrs. Arnold; we will go to the library," said his lordship, starting into action, and adding, as he followed his imperious mother, "I shall soon return."

Mrs. Arnold and Katharine looked at each other; and then looked away:—neither wished to read the tale

told in the other's eyes: and neither remarked aloud that his parting tone had been irresolute.

Time passed, and still Lord Ermiston returned not; —a longer time each thought than it had really been:— but at length a servant entered with "Mrs. Morven's compliments, and she should be glad to see them in the library."

Neither uttered a conjecture on the purpose of the message, as they proceeded thither, arm-in-arm.

Mrs. Morven, a middle-aged woman, with fine features, and a commanding height and manner, was sitting very upright in a large *fauteuil;* whilst near her stood her son, with a flushed cheek and embarrassed air, rolling and unrolling a print, evidently unconscious of the merely mechanical movement. The lady rose as those whose presence she had requested entered, and continued to stand, instead of requesting them to be seated; and this, too, though Katharine's pallid cheeks and trembling frame should have compelled the courtesy. It was evident that she intended to make the interview as brief as possible ; yet her haughty tone was almost modulated into softness as she met the eye of the gentle Mrs. Arnold, and looked on her agitated companion.

"I should apologize, Mrs. Arnold, for entering so abrubtly on an unpleasant subject ; but I imagine the least painful course to all will be to make the discussion as short as may be. You are aware that Lord Ermiston's offer of his hand to Miss Darrell was made in ignorance of her parentage ; and was, of course, no longer bidding on its discovery. I will spare you and him any allusion to the pain which such a disclosure must have occasioned all ; and simply say, that no real friend can desire his lordship's union with Miss Darrell, however great her virtues and her charms. As a mother, I must naturally wish that my daughter-in-law, the Countess of Ermiston, shall be of noble birth ; of a station equal to his own, and for whose connections he need not blush. All must hold him free when undeceived as to Miss Darrell's parentage ; but pity having induced him to renew his offer, his fastidious feelings of honour make

him anxious to receive from you a release from an engagement whose fulfilment must entail misery on many, subjecting all to daily slights and vexations, and separating him for ever from a mother who has held no privation great, no suffering unrepaid, which could promote his good or honour. I cannot receive Miss Darrell as a daughter;—I can hold no communion with my son should he make a choice so unfitting his noble race; and I leave it to you to decide whether, under these circumstances, he can or ought, from a fancied feeling of honour, to bring misery on himself—perhaps death to an only surviving parent."

The lady ceased looking to Mrs. Arnold for a reply, but Mrs. Arnold answered not. Had it been herself she would have spoken on the instant; but she felt the clinging of her trembling child; and she dared not speak the words it would destroy her youthful hopes. There was a brief silence, even Mrs. Morven turning away in pity from the struggle of the gentle girl; and then Katharine herself broke the painful stillness, speaking to the son and not the mother; raising her eyes as she spoke to the face of Lord Ermiston.

"Was it through pity only that your lordship sought me? I prayed that this might not be."

"No, Katharine; I loved you!" he exclaimed with a vehemence at variance with his usual quiet manner, making a step in advance as he spoke, whilst the roll which he had been unfolding fell at his feet.

A look of joy came into Katharine's eyes, heavy with their late weeping.

Mrs. Morven interposed.

"My son did—does love you, Miss Darrell; and were your birth other than it is, I should readily receive you as my daughter;—but think that he would suffer from the mother you would give him? How would she replace the parent, who cherished his childhood? How would you bear to see him who loves you, the representative of a noble race, become through you the mock of folly and the sport of ridicule?

Lord Ermiston involuntarily drew nearer to his

mother as her words brought more distinctly to his mind the laugh which had followed and must ever follow Nan Darrell's mad vagaries, and the sneers to which he would be subjected.

Katharine saw the movement; and sighed deeply. There wanted but this to convince her of that, of which she would still fain have doubted;—by that movement, he had severed the fragile chain which had bound them to each other.

"You do not understand me, madam," she said, with a gentle dignity, which awed even the haughty Mrs. Morven; then, turning to Lord Ermiston, she again addressed him: "You are free, my lord!—you were free before!—you might have spared me this!—you might have spared yourself. Why seek me, when I had given back the vows you plighted! Farewell! May you be happy! such is my earnest prayer."

Lord Ermiston again made a step towards her, but his mother placed her hand on his arm; and Katharine left the room with Mrs. Arnold as quickly as her failing strength permitted.

Mrs. Morven make no remark;—she attempted not to thank Katharine—she pitied—she admired—and was silent. She was a sensible woman;—she was all kindness to her son, now that she had gained her point;—she made no allusion to the past; and, more than all, she carried him off in her own carriage, after a very brief adieu to Mrs. Banham, and the requisite orders to his servants.

The next day saw the departure of Mrs. Arnold and her adopted daughter on a tour of some weeks, despite the entreaties of Mrs. Banham, in the hope that change of scene and the varieties of travel, as well as the absence of all that could recal the past, might the sooner banish that past from their minds.

The absence of all that could recal the past!—vain words! Scenes and faces may be changed—but the bright sun and placid moon; morning and evening; mid-night and mid-day; are still the same. And sight and sound; and earth and air, have they not a thousand

connecting memories with the past?—links in the chain of thought we cannot break, binding the past, the present, and the future, in mighty fetters which death alone can burst? Who has not felt that a glading light—a closing door—a scent—a hue—a breath—can bring the past before us as vividly as can the spell of the enchanter.

Is not memory the mighty master of magicians? And memory brings us sorrow—for there are few who have not mourned:—Yet who would part with memory? Who would throw off her spell?—who would forget the looks and words of those we loved?—the kindness of the kind?—the gentle tones of the affectionate, even though their memory should cause a sigh? If imagination hath more brightness, memory hath more tenderness.

Should any wish to learn how the secret of Kate's birth was known, (for our part we marvel when a secret is preserved, not when it is revealed,) a few words will explain the matter.

Servants, strange to say, will gossip as well as their masters and mistresses; so the domestics at Sallowfield talked over Mrs. Arnold and Miss Darrell, wondering what relation the latter was to the former, till, after some discussion, they decided, as Mrs. Banham had decided, that Katharine was, as they expressed themselves, a love child of the late Mr. Arnold's. When grown more familiar by long acquaintance, they stated this belief to the servants from Beechen Cliff. The stately Mrs. Shaw only looked more stately, contenting herself with a positive denial, on her certain knowledge; but the footman, who had been at Cowford, after profiting more than usual, certainly more than was desirable, by the hospitality of the Sallowfield butler, provoked by the charge against his master, to whom he had been much attached, "outed with the truth," as he admitted to Mrs. Shaw the following morning, who concealed the fact from her lady to spare her unnecessary annoyance. Sound ascend!—The story passed from the servant's hall to Mrs. Banham's dressing room (that lady never discouraged the prattle of her attendant) and the candid

Mrs. Bampton always persisted that she had the first suspicion of the truth from overhearing her hostess caution her maid, in an incautiously loud tone, how she spread a report that might be incorrect.

That the tale did not reach Lord Ermiston through his servants may be accounted for by the fact, that his lordship never condescended to gossip with his domestics (his tastes being equally fastidious wherever he might be); or perhaps still more satisfactory by the second fact, that the secret had not been revealed till two days before it became a subject of notoriety.

The information which induced Mrs. Morven to speed to Sallowfield and snatch her son from a peril, in her estimation little less awful than a shameful death, namely, an unequal marriage, reached her through the same channel—the gossip of servants. Some Sarah or Harriet at Mrs. Banham's, wrote to some Sarah or Harriet at Mrs. Morven's, "that Lord Ermiston was catched by Miss Banham," for the manœuvring of the family was known, or suspected by almost every one acquainted with them, save the single-minded Mrs. Arnold. Janet, the old Scotch nurse, who shared Mrs. Morven's desire of a grand match for the Earl, told the tale to her mistress; who set out on the instant, her promptness and energy still maintaining the mastery over his lordship which she had acquired in his childhood.

Whilst changing horses at the next stage to Sallowfield, Mr. Hensworth rode into the inn yard; and being distinctly connected in blood, though very dissimilar in tastes, entered her room with the avowed purpose of paying his respects, and the unavowed purpose of annoying her and her son; he viewing neither with favour on account of their pride. After due inquiries concerning her health, he mentioned having just quitted Sallowfield, being obliged to go to town that night by the mail, which would pass through in half an hour; and on her asking for the Earl, proceeded to congratulate her on his approaching marriage, giving without any ill will to Katharine, such an account of the ap-

pearance of her crazy mother as left his hearer little more sane, and crowning all by pointing out to her notice, as a future connection, Nan Darrell herself, who passed the inn window at the moment, in a shabby little cart, driven by an ill-looking man. Mr. Hensworth was fully avenged, even without stopping Nan, and introducing her, as he proposed; and Mrs. Morven's speed was not lessened by this new intelligence; whilst her son's dread of ridicule and irresolution of character insured her victory.

Oh, the fearful effects of servants' gossiping! It is an expensive luxury, that should be confined to the use of their betters. To some indeed, it seems a necessary, rather than a luxury.

Before her departure, Mrs. Arnold sent to make inquiries after crazy Nan, intending to provide for her at a distance; but she had left the village with a man, by the western road, or the northern road, or some other; and this was all the intelligence which could be obtained.

Mr. Bell had quitted Sallowfield early in the morning; or would, doubtless, have experienced great pleasure in finding fault with every one.

CHAPTER X.

"He that hath gold is virtuous, wise, discreet:—
The poor are ever in the wrong."

"A bird—but with a broken wing."
HERVEY.

MANY weeks had passed, and Mrs Arnold and Katharine were again sitting in the drawing-room at Sallowfield; not as permanent inmates, but merely spending some hours there on their return to Beechen Cliff, at the very pressing solicitations of Mrs. Banham and her daughters. Katharine would most gladly have been spared this visit, but concealed her own repugnance rather than deprive her kind protectress of another meeting with her old and valued friend. Poor Kate was greatly changed: she was thinner, paler—much thinner, and much paler; her child-like gaiety was gone, for the griefs of the woman had come upon her; and her smiles were sad and rare. She never murmured, and she rarely wept, at least when any saw her; but Mrs. Arnold read in her devoted attentions to herself, her almost restless seeking after change and occupation, how deeply she had felt—how hardly she was struggling for peace, and striving to make the cheerfulness, which was now but assumed, reality. She had never named Lord Ermiston since she had given him back his vows, and Mrs. Arnold, respect-

ing her wishes, maintained as strict a silence, neither encouraging weakness by talking over what was better forgotten, nor fretting her by cold precepts of submission. She saw that she was striving to subdue herself, and that her own silent sympathy was felt and appreciated. She feared lest this visit to Sallowfield might renew her sorrow in its first violence, but if Katharine felt, and she did feel acutely, she only showed it by a paler cheek, and a pressure of Mrs. Arnold's hand as they drove through the gate.

The Banham's were as kind, nay, kinder than ever; and would only permit them to depart as they wished, on receiving their promise to come again at some future time. The young ladies left their other guests to be near dear Katharine, and Mr. George took his station by her side, looking his admiration, as he had done before, his silence being his greatest sign of sense.

Kate was exerting herself to repay these attentions by greater gaiety than usual, when a servant announced Sir John and Mr. Eustace.

Not remarking the christian name, or thinking it a mistake, Katharine rose, passed her hand before her eyes; and then sat down again, from inability to leave the room.

"They are strangers to you, dear;" remarked Maria.

"Strangers?" repeated Katharine, who, connecting Sir Herbert with his cousin, could scarcely keep herself from fainting, by the aid of a vinaigrette with which she pretended to be occupied.

"Yes, strangers. Have you not heard that Sir Herbert is no longer Sir Herbert, but plain Mr. Eustace, his uncle having returned to claim the title; bringing also a son to succeed himself?"

Katharine had not heard, and the intelligence brought to her mind Sir Herbert's remarks on his uncle's portrait, and Mr. Bell's wish for his return. However glad to be spared a meeting with the former possessor of the title, who, save on one occasion, had been uniformly kind, she could not but regret his change of fortune.

She ventured a look at the, to her new, baronet and his son; but she did so with trembling, for they too were the cousins of Lord Ermiston, and might bear some resemblance: they bore none. In the father she saw an old man with a harsh and sinister expression of countenance; in the son, a rather softened likeness of the parent, cunning rather than harsh; with awkward manners: arising from a consciousness of inferiority to his present society.

Further observation showed that the new baronet and his heir apparent were courted and flattered as had been their predecessor. No one seemed to think the expression of Sir John's features sinister—no one seemed to imagine awkwardness in the son. Mrs. Banham and Maria were most friendly and attentive; and, on the guests expressing a desire to see the garden, Charlotte volunteered to do the honours with the same *empressement* with which she had offered to do the honours to the former baronet, whom all had declared to be the most delightful person in the world; whilst Mr. Banham said more than usual about the pleasure of hearing their opinions of some alterations, intimating the superiority of their tastes over that of the late Sir Herbert.

Scarcely were the visitors out of hearing, ere, *selon la mode*, their merits and demerits were discussed; but contrary to the usual practice with regard to the absent, the balance was greatly in favour of the former. Whether this arose from charity, the real worth of the parties discussed, or their possession of rank and wealth, and having as yet had no time to offend, we leave others to decide. Sir John was declared to be sensible, with manners a little stately, perhaps, but fitting his age. Mr. Eustace pleasing and modest, (the last a rare virtue in the present day) and both great acquisitions to the neighbourhood. The discussion then turned on the former baronet, not one, by mistake, giving him the title which he had so long borne, or failing to call him Mr. Herbert Eustace in contradistinction to Mr. Eustace, the heir apparent.

"I wonder Mr. Herbert Eustace gave up the title and estate so easily, having always considered him rather obstinate and self-willed; I advised one or two alterations, but he would not hear of them. By the bye, I hear that Sir John is going to act exactly as I recommended," observed one of the party.

"Obstinacy could have been of no avail here; and Herbert Eustace always knew how to secure his own interests. The horse he sold me at such an enormous price two years ago, pretending all the time that he did not wish to part with it, has turned out lame. Sir John was too wise for him. Depend upon it, the nephew would have disputed the point, and kept the uncle out of the property if he could; but the uncle had guarded against all doubts:—he had every requisite proof and paper, though his great likeness to his portrait, and the testimony of some old people would have been sufficient. Herbert Eustace did all he could, haggling about the arrears, which of course were his uncle's due, till Sir John was disgusted, and did not make him the handsome present which he had intended," replied another.

"Well now, I have heard quite a different story:" interposed a kind hearted old maiden lady, who had more than once profited by the late baronet's kind attentions, attentions which he was always more particular to pay to those whom he considered slighted. "I have heard, and from good authority too, that he yielded with honourable promptness, though candidly acknowledging that he should have preferred retaining wealth and title: whilst Sir John showed such a grasping temper, claiming even the smallest amount of arrears, that a clever lawyer and honourable man, a friend of Herbert's, recommended him to let the law decide the point, all the claims against him having arisen from the present baronet's perverse and inexplicable silence for so many years, though aware of the universal belief of his death. This the young man declined. His high spirit would not brook retaining any thing which the most scrupulous could consider belonging of right to another; and he only ac-

cepted his friend's offer of arranging matters with Sir John, who showed any thing but a kindly spirit, striving to reduce him to beggary, instead of thinking of making him a present. To pay all demands, and provide for some old servants, Herbert gave up even his father's private fortune and his mother's settlement, retaining only five thousand pounds for himself, the legacy of a godfather. In the belief of his friend, and another gentleman who assisted in the arrangement, Sir John has received more than in equity he could have claimed."

"A very pretty tale! And who may have told you this, my dear madam? The young gentleman himself, I suppose; he was always a capital hand at a good story," remarked the first speaker with a sneer.

"Yes, indeed!" observed Mr. Bampton, who was again on a visit at Sallowfield. "His conduct on that point was most unjustifiable and unwarrantable; I often spoke to him on the subject; but it was of no use—he was above advice. You remember the horrible mischief he made between Walker and Miss Stephens:—caused a duel, and might have been hanged for murder—and justly, too. Then the monstrous lies, I really can call them nothing better, that he used to tell about his pictures and curiosities. It was most unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and unpardonable."

"It was, indeed, quite shocking!" responded several, who had, in former days, been lavish of their praise of the baronet's entertaining catalogue of his goods and chattels, as he used to call them.

"Then his deception about Stagg, who ran off with Cooper's daughter, saying he had been called to the bar, making sensible people look so foolish, and rendering a father miserable for the sake of a wretched pun," remarked another, who, at the time, had found that wretched pun a source of merriment, and had been forward in persuading Sir Herbert that he deserved no blame.

"Yes, it was most unjustifiable and unwarrantable," responded Mr. Bampton. "Quite impossible for any

one to know, whether he spoke truth or falsehood. I never believed a word he said."

"Nor I," observed Mr. George Banham, who had credited every syllable.

"As for his manners, I never though them elegant; did you, Miss Banham?" asked a very conceited visitor.

"Far from it! they wanted dignity and harmony. And as for his wit, as people termed it, he was little better than a common punster, whilst his high spirits verged on vulgarity."

"And he had no taste in dress," added her brother, looking down complacently on a new waistcoat, the counterpart of some new model.

"You are too hard on the poor young man:—he had some good points, and one could not help laughing occasionally at his stories. I hope he will succeed in the law, which I understand he means to study," observed the ever-seemingly friendly Mrs. Banham.

"Oh, yes! he deserves to be called to the bar," said another, and a loud laugh followed.

"Hush!" said some one, with a warning glance towards the door leading into the conservatory.

All eyes were turned in that direction; and there was Herbert Eustace leaning against the doorway, with a curling lip and flashing eye, that told he had heard some at least of the late remarks, which the sudden silence succeeding his appearance fixed upon himself. His speaking glances wandered from one to other of the party (to the confusion of most) as he advanced with the unembarrassed air of one accustomed from his childhood to maintain a distinguished station in society; and to whom a change of fortune could bring no change of manner. But for the curl that lingered on his lip, and a slight tone of sarcasm, a spectator might have doubted whether he had overheard the philippic against himself.

"Good morning, Miss Banham;" he began, she being first in his path, shaking hands with her as of old. "You see I maintain my ancient privileges in spite of my new fortunes, and make the unceremonious entrance

of a friend as in former days. Others may change, but you and your family are still the same: I know the real worth of all your friendly professions in my favour."

Even the practised Maria was abashed, but Herbert Eustace, taking no notice of her embarrassment, passed on to pay his compliments to others with the same careless ease, greeting each as had been his wont in other times, only indulging in one or two equivocal remarks to be read at discretion, and pressing the hand of the kind-hearted maiden lady with a pressure which brought tears into her eyes. Thus did he till, in his tour of the room, he came to Mrs. Arnold, before concealed from his observation by a screen; then the careless ease of his manner left him. The warmth of her welcome, contrasting so strongly with the coldness of others, though she, too, would rather not have met him, as a slight agitation showed, by recalling all the painful past to his mind, for a moment, overcame him; and he could only press her hand and turn away; but the next instant he had resumed his former ease. He was not going to make his feelings a jest for those who had none; and he inquired after her health, and even that of Miss Darrell in the unembarrassed tone of one who had nothing to conceal; yet there was a slight increase of colour on hearing that Katharine was on the lawn, though Mrs. Arnold did not add, what was the truth, that she had just stepped out from the window, willing, if possible, without the appearance of rudeness, to avoid a meeting that must agitate her. He was still talking with Mrs. Arnold when his uncle and cousin entered the room accompanied by Charlotte Banham and her father. His old love of mischief induced him to approach the young lady with an appearance of *empressement* which overpowered and annoyed her, since it conveyed the idea that he had been and still was a peculiar favourite. The more she endeavoured to assume a cold indifference, and force him to a like assumption, the more he thwarted her wish by an increased ardour; and by alluding to former meetings and conversations that contradicted her

coldness, till having almost worried her into a passion, and sufficiently annoyed his cousin and heir apparent, to whom the young lady had been particularly civil, he turned away with a light laugh in which mingled something of bitterness, telling the wondering Mr. Eustace, as he did so, that he trusted to him to keep up his interest with *la belle*. His manner to his uncle and cousin had before been as cool as cool could be;—feeling respect for neither, he would not assume its aspect merely to prevent malice fancying pique or envy in his demeanour. The crowding of the rest of the party round Sir John, to assist in discussing some projected improvements at Eustace Park, gave Herbert a few minutes private conversation with Mrs. Arnold.

"You are a very simple person—a very unwise one. Why do you linger here with a briefless, lawless barrister, for in truth I know little more than the babes know, namely, that there is such a work as Coke upon Lyttleton, when you might be basking in the beams of the newly risen sun, bandying pretty words with a tolerably rich baronet—rather a lion, too? Why not pursue a wiser course? Few like you see the rising and the setting sun at the same time, or have the opportunity of profiting by the lessons of those:

> 'Who both by precept and example show,
> How they can smile upon the rising sun—
> Frown on its sunset glow.'

This is not exactly what Byron says, but he is not here to quarrel with the emendation, and ask what a poor ex-baronet means by misquoting his lines."

"A glorious rising may succeed a cloudy setting," remarked Mrs. Arnold kindly; so kindly, that he turned away with a melancholy shake of the head.

"I am a fool!—as great a fool as yourself, begging your pardon," he said abruptly, after a moment's silence. "Why should I care what such things as those think of me? I thought in my prosperity that I despised them;

but I did not, nay, do not know myself. Then they are going to alter Eustace Park;—just the part my father so much loved—and his brother knows it. I would give him the little his grasping hate has left me to leave it as it is, but that I know he would take the money and evade the terms. Well, it does not matter! I shall never see the old place again—I could not bear to see him there. I came here to-day to take leave; and there is not one who would care did I leave it undone. How can you be such a simpleton as to patronize a mere punster—an unmannered, ill-drest beggar—a boisterous, vulgar, story teller?—Whose word no man relies on."

"Hush! Hush!" said Mrs. Arnold, gently laying her hand on his arm. "I must not have you speak in that tone, though I feel, deeply feel the provocation. I have long wished to thank you for your kindness—"

"A kindness! never think of remembering a kindness!—it is always the first thing to be forgotten. You certainly are *non compos*," he observed, interrupting her. "Well! Well!" he continued, "do not look such a touching reproach; and I will try to be good. If it were not for some few such hearts as yours I should turn cynic like Mr. Bell. I wonder what he says to my fall; he wished it, and, therefore, doubtless rejoices. He was a harsh reprover, yet a just one, too, I believe, sometimes, but I differ from the world; I never liked to be found fault with."

"I do not mean to find fault with you, I only wish to thank you for your kindness, when another—" she hesitated.

"Ay, when another!—There it is;" he said abruptly, in a tone of contempt; then checking himself, he added:—"No matter—it could not be helped—and it is all over now. One cannot force oneself to love, though perhaps one can to unlove; at least, I hope so." Then lowering his voice and speaking with great feeling: "May I ask how she is? How she has borne—?"

"Well! beautifully! like herself;" replied Mrs. Arnold, understanding his broken question. "Ever striving to conquer and conceal, that she may fail in no duty, give pain to none; yet feeling deeply—very deeply."

"I knew it would be so! I knew it must;" said Herbert Eustace warmly; and with a slight faltering in his voice. "And her health? and her sunny smile that it was such a happiness to meet?"

"Her health is delicate;—her sunny smile I hope may return—but now—"

"I understand—I was a simpleton to ask that. What a pity that a cloud should have crossed the brightness of her mood!—that sorrow should have dulled the glory of her spring of life!"

"It is sad—more sad if we look only to the present; but it may, I trust it will, be for her future good; and now such is her own thought amidst all her grief. How could we bear our sorrows but for this trust?" exclaimed Mrs. Arnold with a look of hope, bright hope, lighting up her placid features.

"This should shame me to submission: I have thought too little of these things."

"Think of them now, then;—now, in your youth, ere the heart is seared, and the spirit warped or hardened with the trials and the cares of life. Turn to Him who delighteth not to chastise: and does it but to draw us nearer to himself."

"Thank you! I will think of your words," replied Herbert Eustace, touched by her gentle but earnest appeal.

He was, indeed, grateful for her friendly interest, and her soft tones and pleading manner sank deep into his heart. It was some moments ere he spoke again.

"I have not sought Miss Darrell, fearing lest my presence might recal the past more strongly to her mind;—will you hereafter tell her this, and add that I hope she has forgiven and forgotten my ungenerous harshness? I stand well in the opinion of so few, that I must right myself with the kindly disposed. I would

have her regard me as a friend, not a fierce and furious Ogre," he added gaily.

"I will engage that she shall regard you as a friend, though she may shrink from meeting you to-day."

"That is natural. I only mean should we meet by accident hereafter."

"Accident! Why not on purpose some months hence, when Katharine shall have gained the firmness she is seeking? I do not ask you to Beechen Cliff till then."

"I will think about it. I am sure I should be better for your gentle schooling; and I will teach you worldly wisdom in return. Do not ask me till I can serve you with legal advice, and then your courtesy may be repaid."

"I will learn no such wordly wisdom; and you must not become suspicious: there are many kind, warm hearts, though erring ones; I should sorrow to see you a selfish misanthrope."

"There are warm hearts in the world, Mrs. Arnold; and your kind words are engraven on my memory. As few will seek my acquaintance, I shall have time to know myself, and learn to despise their falsehood," he added, pointing to the group round the Baronet. "To you I am bound forever;—you have reproved, but in kindness. Count upon me now and through life to serve you or her; though, alas! it is little that I can do at present; but if ever I should become famous in the law, I shall insist on your engaging in a suit that I may carry it on for you."

"If you please ma'am, your carriage is at the door," said a servant approaching Mrs. Arnold.

"Are you going?—then I am gone! It would be of no use to sport witicisms now, for not a creature would laugh at them; so I intend to be very grave and sedate for the future, and hold with Mr. Bampton, that it is unjustifiable, unwarrantable, and unpardonable to tell a good story, or say a good thing. Nay, do not look grave! you must allow me to vent a little of my vexation in words. It is very difficult for an idol to

descend gracefully from his shrine, and mix with every day mortals, in an every day way ; he cannot help wondering and vexing a little now and then that he is not bowed down to as before. His worshippers having been only some of the world's commonality makes little difference. But I really am going directly for many good and sufficient reasons :—poor people are required to be reasonable. In the first place, having been unbaroneted, I must not presume to hand you to your carriage ;—and why should I subject myself to the mortification of seeing that service performed by another? Secondly, I shall avoid a meeting with Miss Darrell, for which she will thank me. Thirdly : not being in the most amiable of moods, I had better keep myself to myself. Fourthly, and I believe lastly : as I must expect to be cut up the moment my back is turned, I think it good policy to leave a friend who may say a word in my favour. So, good bye ! Heaven bless you—and her ! How you will hear me abused ! every tongue will be let loose as I close the door behind me—the great door, for I shall not return as a friend, lest I should example the truth of some other disagreeable old adage. Well, let them talk ! it is for the public good that the departed should be dissected for the benefit of those remaining," he added with some of his former reckless gaiety, shaking hands with Mrs. Arnold, and then making brief *adieux* to the rest of this party, who looked relieved by his absence.

Mrs. Arnold's immediate departure prevented her hearing the dissection to which he had so patriotically determined to submit.

The Banhams were all regret at so short a visit, and Mr. George handed Katharine to the carriage with a sentimental air, whose meaning she never guessed, till something having led to the subject during their journey home, Mrs. Arnold ventured to fulfil a promise extorted from her by her old friend, and name the wishes of the whole family that she should become the bride of the highly interesting heir. A smile, half playful, half contemptuous, curled Kate's ruby lip, as she considered the

suitor submitted to her choice ; then other thoughts came crowding on, and she sank back in the carriage with a burst of tears.

"I think I can anticipate your decision, Kate ; though I promised to mention the subject, lest others should name it from whom you would less willingly hear it."

"I think you may, my own dear mother ;—I wonder Mrs. Banham touched upon so delicate a point."

"My old friend meant it kindly, but I have lately doubted if she is quite as sensitive as in our younger days ; she has mixed more in the world than myself, which may account for this. She spoke of pique and expediency, but I knew you better than to think that you would be ruled by either."

"I have no pique ;—and this is not a point on which expediency should be consulted. I will be yours !—all yours !—yours only ! Do I not deserve this pain for letting others share my heart ?" exclaimed the grateful girl, throwing her arms around her.

"Not so, dear child ; it was but natural :—it was but as I would have it again hereafter. I would not leave you unprotected."

"No, I can never love again ;—and am now wholly yours."

Mrs. Arnold did not dispute the point at the moment ; she had loved but once herself, and she knew how the young heart shudders at the thought of change. Its first affection scorned and trampled on, it may feel the necessity of subduing, it cannot admit the idea of transfer. But Katharine was very young, and she hoped much from time ! How we all count on time ! It does wonders—but we may not live to see them. She soothed her into composure, and on some allusion being made to Herbert Eustace, gave his message, which her young favourite received with less emotion than she had anticipated.

The return to Beechen Cliff was a great trial, but to spare Mrs. Arnold, Katharine forced herself to cheerfulness, though shuddering at the thought of what she had been—of what she now was. The doom of man was

on her! Sorrow had crossed her path, and her life could no longer be, as it had been for years, as a cloudless summer day. The blight of experience was on all things round her: she had learnt the uncertainty of joy, not from precepts, (the young forget precepts, in fact scarce believe them,) but from personal suffering. The truth had been brought home so her;—traced on her heart by the sharp instrument of sorrow—there must now be submission, the more humble, and the more cheerful, the happier would be her walk on earth—the more hopeful her departure from its cares.

Mrs. Arnold, for Katharine's sake would have prolonged her tour; but the Millars, who had just arrived from India, proposed being at Beechen Cliff the day after her return; other engagements they said, making it inconvenient to fix a later time; and she did not object, thinking their society and that of their children might divert the thought of her *protegée* from melancholy subjects. Nor was she herself without her sorrows, independent of those connected with Katharine: death had been busy since her departure. The worthy old clergyman and his estimable wife, the valued friends of many years, had died within four-and-twenty hours of each other, and rested in the same grave. Though greatly shocked by this intelligence, her frame having been already weakened by her anxiety for Katharine, she still trusted that a little quiet would restore her to her usual state of health.

"My poor child!" she murmured, after marking the listless air with which Katharine held her book, and how soon that book was laid aside, whilst a sadder expression came over her features, and tears began to fall unconsciously. It was just such an evening as that before their departure;—it was the same room;—Mrs. Arnold, as then, was reclining on a sofa, but Katharine —how different was Katharine! The happy, hoping child, had returned the sorrowing, experienced woman. Little older in her looks—little older in her days—but, oh! how much older in her knowledge! Perhaps she, too, was thinking of the contrast.

Katharine started; wiped away the tears, which had come unbidden, and crossing the room knelt by her side as she had done before. But how did she cross the room? how did she look as the knelt beside her protectress? There was no bounding step—no brightness in her eye—no glow upon her cheek.

"My poor Kate! and have I done all this!—wrought you misery when I thought to give you happiness."

"And have I not been happy? You must not heed these tears. I shall be as I used to be in time—or very like it."

Mrs. Arnold shook her head.

"If not, I shall have none but myself to blame. Have I not now all that I had then? I will strive to forget that I desired more;—strive to look upon its loss as a chastening to be grateful for. You warned me that I made idols of all I loved—I fear I have. We will be happy again, dear mother, do not doubt it;—we will be all to each other. No, I am not making you an idol, as you would say, only loving you as you should be loved; and thinking how grateful!—how very grateful! I should be for all your care. What might I not have been, with none but that poor crazy woman for my guide?"

"If I were sure, Kate—quite sure,—that you never blamed me."

"Blame you?"

"No, not blame, that is too strong a word; but thought—felt that had I left you in obscurity, or brought you up less delicately, you might not have known this trial."

"I never thought—I never felt this, even for one moment. Look into my eyes. I do not turn away; and I should do so if I told a falsehood. I know my birth may subject me to slights, and the child of your love, I feel those slights too deeply; but never did I feel aught but gratitude to you for all your kindness, all your care. Do not think me ungrateful:—I am not that—I cannot be."

"I never thought you so; and now you have removed

the only doubt which pressed upon my heart; your love has ever been a blessing. We will be happy in each other—thankful for our meeting—thankful for our many years of peace and joy; but having brought you up so delicately, I must take heed that your tastes receive no shock. Write to Mr. Payne, requesting him to call on me to-morrow morning: I must make a new will directly—I should have done it long ago."

Katharine playfully remonstrated if the will was to be in her favour, but Mrs. Arnold would hear of no delay; something like a presentiment weighed upon her, and she wished to make all requisite arrangements before the arrival of the Millars. If she could not shield her favourite from the effects of low birth, she would, at least, not subject her to bear the pains and penalties of poverty, with all the tastes and habits of expense. Who would turn out a cherished exotic in the frost and snow of January?

Complaining of fatigue, Mrs. Arnold retired early after a more than usually affectionate embrace and blessing.

Poor Katharine wept herself to sleep, little thinking that she might have greater cause for sorrow ere night came round again.

CHAPTER XI.

"Till one stern stroke of all my state,
Of all my bliss bereft me,
And I was worse than desolate."—

DALE.

IT was late before Katharine fell asleep, and it was late before she awoke : and that not quietly and naturally, but roused by a bustle in the house and with strong fear upon her mind.

She sprang to the door.

"What is the matter ?" she inquired of the housekeeper, who was sobbing in the passage.

"My mistress ! oh, my poor mistress !"

Katharine staid to hear no more ;—in another instant she was in Mrs. Arnold's room bending over her—pressing her lips to her's—speaking to her in the tones of endearment.

At those loving words the sufferer revived and rather turned towards her : whilst a servant, putting aside the curtain at the moment, the full morning light streamed in upon the bed. The affectionate girl turning deadly pale, with difficulty suppressed a cry of pain ; and would have sunk on the floor, had not Mrs. Shaw at the instant caught her in her arms. Those placid features were distorted—the mouth was drawn on one side —the eyes had a wild, bewildered look—the voice was

harsh and indistinct—and one side completely paralyzed. Thus had Mrs. Shaw found her respected mistress on entering her room rather later than usual. The means pursued by the family physician, who had been immediately sent for, restored Mrs. Arnold to a clearer degree of consciousness; but with that consciousness came anxiety. The paralytic stroke had been a severe one: her medical attendant shook his head and spoke doubtingly to Mrs. Shaw, though concealing his fears from the weeping Katharine. She might linger—she might have a second seizure immediately—the great thing was to keep her perfectly quiet, and free from anxiety; he even talked of banishing Kate from the room, but Kate hushed her sobs, and the sufferer so pined for her presence that he thought it most prudent to allow her to remain. They might and did prevent all noise, but to keep Mrs. Arnold free from anxiety was beyond their power. There was some desire in her mind so strong that till that was accomplished she could know no rest; and her distress increased when she found the difficulty of making her wishes understood. Perhaps there are few situations more distressing than when affection strives, but in vain, to understand and fulfil the wishes of the object of its regard, the mind being too confused, the speech too much affected to admit of clearness in thought or expression: whilst the sufferer, unconscious of the failing of her own powers, only reads their inefficiency in the bewildered looks and mistakes of her attendants; and at length yields to the suspicion that there is no longer the desire to accomplish those wishes, or the quick eye of love would read them. What a harrowing history, if the tongue could tell!—or the hand could trace! The very anxiety to be, and annoyance at not being understood, increasing the difficulty of explanation, and the danger of a relapse.

Katharine's eager love and quickness of apprehension saved Mrs. Arnold from much of this annoyance, and at length enabled her to comprehend that the sufferer's most anxious desire was to see Mr. Payne and the Mil-

lars on the subject of her will. By the advice of the physician Katharine promised that she should see either, or both, on their arrival ; and, tranquillised by the promise, Mrs. Arnold sank into a quiet sleep, holding the hand of her adopted child in one of her's. Dr. Potter left her, with greater hopes, to attend another patient, engaging to return and spend the night at Beechen Cliff.

Mrs. Arnold awoke considerably refreshed and with clearer ideas, and more distinct speech. Her first question was for the lawyer; and her attendants, finding her mind set on transacting business, were obliged to tell her that he could not see her that day, nor probably for some days to come. In truth, he was then lying at the point of death, from injuries received by a fall from his horse the night before. The intelligence appeared to annoy her; and she murmured something about sending for some one else, but named none in particular ; then learning that the Millars had arrived, she requested to see them immediately.

The physician insisted that the interview should be very short ; and so it was, scarcely more than ten minutes: but that it had been satisfactory was proved by the sufferer's look and manner:—earthly anxieties seemed set at rest : and she was all patient submission to the will of Heaven.

"You look so much better, my own dear mamma ; and will soon, I trust, be yourself again," exclaimed the sanguine and affectionate Katharine, kissing her pale cheek.

Mrs. Arnold pressed her hand ; smiled a sweet, sad smile—murmured that she was satisfied, since her child's future fortunes were provided for ; and then, fatigued with explaining her wishes to the Millars, sank again into a quiet slumber.

Nothing could induce Katharine to leave her side; indeed the mere endeavour to remove her hand made the sufferer restless, so Dr. Potter allowed her to remain, admiring the fortitude with which she subdued her

emotion, but trembling for her health when the shock should come, as come it must, he feared before the morning. And the shock did come that very night.

The patient sufferer stirred with an indistinct murmur, as of pain;—Katharine bent eagerly over her to learn her wish.—The physician and nurse advanced with a candle:—the glaring eyes winked slightly at the light, and then were fixed:—the lips moved, and then were still. Dr. Potter felt the pulse; put the hand gently down, and looked at the nurse, who returned the glance. Katharine caught that look;—for months it was before her with its fearful tale.

"No! No! it cannot be!" she exclaimed with vehemence.

"Let me entreat you to retire," said the physician kindly.

"No! No! leave me with her!" she cried, twining her arms round the senseless body as she spoke.

It was not till many days after the funeral that Katharine was even well enough to leave her bed. The shock, acting on a frame weakened by mental suffering, had been still more severe than the physician had anticipated; and for some time her life hung on a thread. Weeks passed before she was well enough to walk alone to her friend's grave.

The Millars, who seemed anxious for her restoration to health, tried to dissuade her from the attempt; but she said, and said truly, that it would be a consolation. From that time she mended more rapidly: and though her child-like gaiety was gone, perhaps never to return, she was calm and patient, striving by occupation and attention to the wants of others to overcome the listlessness succeeding a long illness, and that carelessness of life, following the loss of all we prize on earth. And she had truly lost all that she prized on earth—the only one who loved her—her sole link to human kind, save the dependants of her late protectress, who still pitied and respected her. But she had not felt this desolation, as she was to feel it; she had sometimes regretted that

though the Millars meant to be kind there was not more sympathy between them:—she did not as yet know that they had scarcely one thought in common.

More than three months had elapsed since Mrs. Arnold's death, and Katharine was sitting at work in her own little room, striving to acquire cheerfulness, yet, despite herself, fretting at some little alterations which showed to her delicate affection a want of feeling towards the dead, when Mrs. Millar entered, and after some preliminary discourse touched on the object of her visit.

"I am glad to see you so much better, Miss Darrell. Mrs. Arnold's death must of course be a great loss; but with the education which you have received, you can find no difficulty in providing for yourself, and for her sake I shall be most happy to further your wishes. May I ask what plans you have formed; and whither you intend to go on leaving Beechen Cliff?"

"Leave Beechen Cliff?" exclaimed poor Kate in grief and surprise, such an idea never having entered her mind.

"It will be painful to you, that is natural; and we have no wish to hurry your departure; indeed, are sorry that our large family prevents our asking you always to remain with us," remarked Mrs. Millar with a flushed cheek, looking away as she spoke.

"Am I to understand then, madam, that I have no right to remain at Beechen Cliff; and that you wish me to remove?" asked the poor girl, listening to her reply with breathless anxiety.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Millar with a still averted head. "Your name is not mentioned in Mrs. Arnold's will, though made some time after your residence with her: the whole of her property, with the exception of some legacies to old servants, and charitable bequests, is left to my husband."

Katharine gasped for breath; and then burying her face in her hands, burst into a passion of tears.

Leave Beechen Cliff where she had been so happy!—Where she had lived, whom she had so fondly loved!—

whom she could almost fancy present, though unseen, and go to a new place, where there would be no loving memories—where all would seem so cold and strange! It was like losing another friend:—this was to be desolate, indeed!

"We will talk of this some other time, said Mrs. Millar more kindly, rising to go.

"No, madam, now: let me know all at once;" sobbed Kate, striving to control her emotion.

"What would you wish to know?" asked Mrs. Millar coldly.

"The old servants—must they go, too?" asked Katharine.

"Not before the end of the year, if they choose to remain till then: they are to receive a twelvemonth's wages and legacies besides. They ought to think themselves well off, for some are nearly passed their work, and yet I understand they grumble. I am sorry to say, there is very little gratitude among dependants now-a-day. Shaw and Carter, I hear, are married, and living like lady and gentleman on what they made out of their over-indulgent mistress: no wonder she did not choose to wait till the end of the year. I think it a duty to look after my servants."

"The honesty and attachment of Shaw and Carter were ever beyond a doubt," remarked Katharine with spirit, indignant at the insinuation.

"All are not agreed on that point, and I am not bound to be of the same opinion as Miss Darrell, I conclude. But I did not come here to discuss the characters of servants; I came to know if I could assist you in your future plans."

"I have formed no plans, having understood from my more than mother that she had enabled me to live on in that style to which she had accustomed me."

"She may have thought of so doing, but there is the will to prove that she never did it. You can see it any day if you still doubt; Mr. Bennett, Mr. Payne's successor, has it in his hands."

"I cannot doubt you, madam; but it is most strange!

even after her last interview with you," and her voice faltered as she thought how soon that interview had been succeeded by her death, "I learned from her broken words, which I little heeded then, that Beechen Cliff would still be mine."

"Really, Miss Darrell, this is a most extraordinary statement!" and the speaker's cheek flushed a deeper crimson. "It is impossible for me to say what Mrs. Arnold, confused as was her intellect, may have intimated to you, though I am more inclined to think you must have misunderstood her indistinct and broken speech. She certainly spoke of you to us, as I was going to tell you, not having entered on the subject before, from your indulging in such paroxysms of grief if I but named your benefactress. Moderate sorrow would have been commendable, for, of course, you cannot be sufficiently grateful to Mrs. Arnold for taking you from the parish, and giving you an education by which you may support yourself; but I cannot approve of the violent grief to which you have given way ever since her death, thus rendering yourself incapable of exerting your talents. She was naturally anxious to see us, as being the nearest relatives of her husband, from whom she received her wealth, though that wealth is not what might have been expected, having been sadly squandered; and, after saying many flattering things to Mr. Millar, she recommended you to our care, begging us to be kind to you, which we promised;—and will perform, as long as you fulfil my poor aunt's good opinion. We have allowed you to remain here for many months with this apartment all to yourself, though with my large family, there is not much space in the house; and the room is wanted for the governess. Besides this, Mr. Millar has paid the enormous expenses caused by your long illness, and intends to give you two hundred pounds."

She paused; but as Katharine offered no thanks, she continued:—

"It shall be paid when you leave us. Perhaps you would like to set up a milliner's shop; or something

else of the kind, as you work so nicely ; in which case I would recommend you to my friends, though you had better not set up in this neighbourhood, I should think, as you might not find it pleasant."

"I have no intention of setting up a milliner's shop anywhere ; and will not trouble you, madam, to recommend me to your friends," replied Katharine rather proudly, thinking how this very person had formerly spoken of her to Mrs. Arnold ; always in her letters, terming her that dear child, and sending loves and presents.

"Just as you please. I dare say you may succeed as a governess, or companion ; for all may not require, as I do for my children, a person who has been abroad, and speaks French and Italian as a native, besides being a superior musician. I may be rather too particular. One is obliged to educate one's daughters so highly in the present day that they come nearly as expensive as sons ; but, no doubt, you will soon get a situation. You had better write to your friends immediately if you have not done so already."

"I have no friends."

Again Mrs. Millar turned away, as if touched by the speaker's look and tone.

"Poor girl ! This comes of bringing up people above their station. I will write to some of my friends and see what can be done ; and you may stay here a little longer ; for we do not want you to go directly, only you really must not encourage your grief, or you will be fit for nothing ; just as useless as you have been these last four months. It is a duty to keep up your spirits."

The door closed behind Mrs. Millar without her receiving any reply.

Her communication had been so totally unexpected that the startled Katharine had not at first fully comprehended it ; but as she saw her meaning clearer, the crimson flush deepened on her cheek, then died away, as indignation yielded to despair. Now was she desolate indeed ! She looked round the little room so taste

fully arranged—her own peculiar room for some years past—her eye resting on each object as though to note its worth in the memory ; and then she looked out on the garden, the lawn, the shrubbery, and the wood beyond, unconscious, till this moment, how closely they were twined around her heart. An iron band seemed bound across her brow—her eyeballs ached with an eager looking—the voice of the old gardener came to her from below ; and that familiar sound bursting the spell that had held her tears, she bowed her face upon her hands and wept long and bitterly, till relieved by this gush of wo, she tried to think of her future plans. Leave Beechen Cliff she must, and quickly too :—but whither should she go ? She had no friend—no relative, but a crazy mother, wandering she knew not whither. You might range the world and scarcely find so lone—so desolate a being. Mrs. Arnold had associated with no one in her own neighbourhood but the Etheringtons ; they were gone—and she knew no others, but those whom she had met at Sallowfield.

Sallowfield !—she trembled at the thought. Would that she had never known it ! The wish was idle ; and she would not think of what she had so long been striving to forget.

It was strange that Mrs. Arnold, after all her declarations, should have left her destitute : but as Mrs. Millar said there was the will to prove it. Did she blame Mrs. Arnold ? Not for one moment ! She decided that that lady's anxiety to see Mr. Payne had been for the purpose of providing for her ; and finding that impossible, she had recommended her to the care of the Millars, believing them to be far other than they were. But however satisfied of the intentions of her kind protectress, those intentions not having been fulfilled, she saw the necessity of seeking an independence ; and then the question came—how was this to be done ? She had replied on the instant to Mrs. Millar that she had no friends, but there were some who, she doubted not, would assist her, though she felt some little delicacy in applying to them ; and these were the Banhams.

When sufficiently recovered to read it, a letter from Mrs. Banham had been put into her hand condoling with her on the loss of her benefactress, offering her services in any way, and inviting her to Sallowfield for change of air. It was just such a letter as she should have expected—so kind, so affectionate—so full of regret for the loss of her old friend ;—and so full of friendly offers to her young one ; and if she had put in rather marked remembrances from her son in the postscript, Katharine had excused it on account of a parent's love ; but it was this very postscript which made her hesitate to claim the fulfilment of Mrs. Banham's friendly offers. She had answered this letter as soon as equal to the task, and had not heard since ; but she had no scruple of ceremony with the warm-hearted mistress of Sallowfield, and only hesitated from the fear that there might be some awkwardness about Mr. George ; or that she might in return receive a more pressing invitation. This last she could scarcely refuse if warmly pressed ; yet to revisit Sallowfield at present would be to disturb that quiet which she had so hardly gained. There was however no alternative ; so the letter was written, every particular fully explained, and Mrs. Banham requested to exert her influence in procuring her a situation, and to advise her as to her future plans.

It may seem strange that Katharine should not before have learnt that she was a beggar ; but her youth, her ignorance of business, and the little selfishness of her character, may account for her want of knowledge in this respect. True, when nearly restored to health, she saw Mr. Millar take on himself to command and control in a manner that did not please her ; but being under age, she concluded that he was her guardian, and knowing Mrs. Arnold's high opinion of his merits, hesitated at offering any remonstrance, or asking any question. She might incidentally have learnt the truth from others, but, glad to be alone, she seldom left her room ; and the old servants whom she sometimes saw did not touch on the subject, fearing to pain her ; though the point was freely and frequently dis-

cussed among themselves, and more than one doubt expressed as to the validity of the will. Nay, the prim Mrs. Shaw, before her departure, which had not taken place till Kate was well enough to dispense with her nursing, was not satisfied till she had obtained a sight of the will from Mr. Bennett, and consulted him as to its legality. Alas ! its legality could not be disputed ; and here was another warning of the danger of procrastination. Mrs. Arnold, though feeling the misery to which poverty would subject one brought up like Katharine in every elegance, till the luxuries of refinement had become absolute necessaries, had deferred altering her will from day to day till no longer time was given ; her only excuse, and that very excuse proving her dangerous habit of delay, that she could not make up her mind as to the exact distribution of her property, the chance of Katharine's marriage causing some alteration in her wishes.

CHAPTER XII.

"Call you me, daughter?"
Taming of the Shrew.

Adam.—But do not so; I have five hundred crowns,
The thrifty hire I served under your father,
Take that; and he that doth the ravens feed,
Yea providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age; here is the gold,
All this I give you, let me be your servant.
As you Like It.

Day by day, hour by hour, did Katharine see more clearly that her presence was unwelcome in that house where she had heretofore been a petted favourite; and day by day, and hour by hour, did she become more anxious for the means of departure: but Mrs. Millar heard of no situation, though she had made many inquiries; and no letter arrived from Sallowfield.

The Banhams may be from home, thought Katharine; and thus she tried to comfort herself for the delay. She might, and did, at times, give way to a feeling of despair, when she thought of her desolate state; but she was not the fretful, profitless sorrower Mrs. Millar had represented. She certainly trembled at the thought of entering into a world of which she knew so little, without one kind friend to guide or protect her; but she saw at

once that it was her duty: and she prayed for strength to enable her to fulfil it.

The day was fine for the season—early spring—and Kate set off for a walk, hoping that the fresh, pure air would drive away one of those headaches which now so frequently oppressed her. Avoiding the village, she chose a path leading to the top of a steep hill, partially covered with brush wood, interspersed with forest trees; and crowned with the rather picturesque ruins of an old windmill half hid in ivy. It had been a favourite haunt in childhood, and she wished to visit it once more. She had nearly reached the top, when, on turning round a thicket, a figure started up before her, whose fantastic dress and singular manner could not be mistaken—it was crazy Nan! Kate shrank back distressed and alarmed, as she thought of their last meeting, and clung to a tree for support. Perfectly unconscious how unwelcome was her presence, Nan Darrell advanced towards her daughter with her usual mincing step and ludicrous attempt at dignity.

"So you are come to me, because he would not let me go to you. But what are you in black for? I don't like black. And they won't make you a lady, I hear;—but they should though, if I had been there; ay, and they shall yet—let him say what he will!" she exclaimed, looking round, with a half daring and half timid glance. "Little Kate shall be a lady! I said so—and so it shall be. And I'll dance at the wedding: I can dance very well. Then I shall be a lady, too; and we'll go to court and see the queen. She will be glad to see us, I fancy, and want our handsome dresses. And the king shall hand us about. Don't tell," drawing closer to Kate, "the king wants to make me queen;—but I won't say yes, for *he* would not like it; but you shall go to court, let him scold ever so.—Come with me, and I'll show you something; but make haste, for if he should come back he will be angry;" and seizing Kate's arm, she began dragging her up the hill to her increasing alarm, till observing some men at a little

distance, whom a call would summon to her aid, she thought it best to humour the poor crazy creature, who, however distressing the thought, was still her mother.

"Look here, Kate! pretty, is not it?" she asked, drawing from under her cloak a small bundle covered with a tawdry handkerchief, and showing it to Katharine, whom she had dragged with breathless speed up the steep hill into the ruined windmill. "But there is something better than that here," she added, whispering in her ear, after throwing a keen look around. "If all these stones were gold," turning over one as she spoke, "here is something that you would like much better."

"Indeed! What is it?" asked her daughter, whose curiosity was half awakened by the poor creature's earnest manner.

"Ah! what is it, indeed? Nobody else knows; but I know. Look," unfolding the outer, dirty handkerchief, and holding it so that the light fell full upon its gaudy colours.

"Fit for a queen, is not it? And I shall be a queen soon," looking mysteriously. "And see here!" unfolding another nearly as fine: "I get a good many of these things:—people give them to me that I may make them lords and ladies when I am queen;—but I won't, though: for they laugh, and call me crazy Nan;" and a frown came on her brow. "They cannot bear to see me so handsome; but I am a lady in my own light, and ladies should be handsome."

"Have you nothing else in the bundle?" questioned Kate, her curiosity sorely disappointed.

"Nothing else? Don't you see another handkerchief? Do you think I have only one or two? Pretty thing for the Queen of England to have but two handkerchiefs, when I shall ride in a coach-and-six one of these days; and have twelve footmen behind!"

Kate reached towards the bundle; but her mother snatched it away with an angry gesture, raising her hand, stamping her foot, and giving way to a burst of mingled rage and grief.

"So you would rob your mother, and be her death? But you shan't have it. Poor Nan! Every one robs Nan Darrell—no one is kind to poor Nan."

"I will be kind to you," said Kate, moved almost to tears by the sorrowful tone in which the last few words were spoken.

"Will you? And will you give me a new gown as handsome as this? and a gold ring?" asked the poor creature eagerly.

And this wretched being, whose vanity and love of finery had survived the wreck of many a better feeling, was her mother! Katharine burst into a passion of tears, and turned away.

"Kate! poor Kate! Good little Kate? Don't cry, and I'll make you a lady yet;" said Nan affectionately, patting her softly on the back.

These kindly words at once won a place for the speaker in the warm heart of her child, who had so seldom of late heard the tones of affection; and bitterly did she reproach herself for the terror, the almost loathing, with which she had hitherto regarded this poor creature, who, amid all the vagaries of her vanity, had still some soft and motherly feelings.

"Don't cry, Kate, and I'll show you:—but no—I must not—he won't let me," continued Nan, shaking her head; the fear of some one whom she never named seeming to struggle with her pity: "but I'll give you this;" holding out the handkerchief, which she so much prized, though evidently reluctant to part with it, putting it on Katharine, smoothing it down, and uttering exclamations at its beauty.

In the midst of her tears, and in the full flow of her gratitude for the crazy creature's kindness, Katharine could not repress a smile at her ludicrous demonstrations of admiration, or her own appearance, as far as she could observe it, with the red and yellow rag smoothed over her black dress. Drying her tears she spoke soothingly to poor Nan, thanking her warmly for her intended kindness, but evidently pleasing her still more by declining

the handkerchief, which appeared to be an especial favourite with its owner.

"Good girl, Kate;" folding up the flaunting rag most carefully: "Good girl! you shall be a lady yet; but you must not have this—not till I die, mind; and then I leave it to you;" holding the bundle very tight, of which she fancied Katharine still showed some wish to take possession.

"You need not fear, I will not touch it; I only wanted to know what was in it."

"Strange thing! beautiful things!" said Nan, speaking low and mysteriously, with keen and hurried glances round. "What will make you a lady!—a silver sixpence with a hole in it to keep you safe:—and—but no, I'll not tell you; or you will rob me; and then he will kill me," putting it behind her, notwithstanding Katharine's protestations that she had no desire for its possession. Then changing her mood, she exclaimed abruptly—"But the sun is going down, and I have not done what I came here for:—I don't always say what I mean—or do what I would. Poor Nan! she is not what she was, and people laugh;—and the boys shout there goes 'Crazy Nan!' Ah! they won't do so when I am queen; but I must make haste now, or he will come and take it from me. He shan't have it though," she added passionately, setting her teeth as she spoke. "He shall do all else he likes; but he shan't have this, I give it to you—but not till I am dead, or he will be angry with me. Now look at me, and mind;" and Katharine did look at her, wondering at her actions.

Pulling an old knife from her pocket she groped with it round a tolerable-sized stone imbedded in the earth, which, after some time, she succeeded in raising; thus displaying a space beneath, rough stones also imbedded, forming its sides. The hole appeared to have been used as a secret treasure-house by crazy Nan before, to judge from some odd articles and a small bundle lying therein. Looking at these as if to ascertain that nothing had been taken away, she deposited the new parcel in the open space, closing it over as before, and trampling the earth

till no sign remained of that stone's having been recently raised.

"Mind this place!—but don't come till I am dead —or give you leave; or he will kill me:—and be sure and tell no one. And now come along, for fear he should suspect," she exclaimed, seizing her arm, and dragging her down the hill as she had dragged her up, till they had nearly reached the base, when she let go her grasp, and leant against a tree to recover breath.

"What do you here? Did not I tell you not to seek the girl?" questioned a harsh voice close to Nan, who started, trembled, and then endeavoured to explain that the meeting with Katharine had been accidental.

"I told you not to go near Beechen Cliff," observed the former speaker, an ill looking man with marked features, stepping from behind a thicket into Katharine's view, and fixing his keen eyes full upon her.

"I did not go there, Kate came this way," said the woman submissively.

"You should not have been near here," was his harsh reply. "And what has that crazy woman been saying to you?" he demanded of Katharine, placing himself so directly in her path that she could not proceed.

Displeased and half alarmed, Katharine would have shown her displeasure, and insisted on his letting her pass, but comprehending the pleading gestures of Nan, exhibited behind his back, she answered with conciliating gentleness:

"She talked in her usual wild way, something about being a queen."

"A queen!" he repeated scornfully. "But what did you come to meet her for?"

"I did not even know that she was in the neighbourhood; and we met by accident as she says. Let me pass!" she added, disliking his manner more and more; but she was not to have her way thus easily.

"You shall pass when I please, and not before; I am not to be frightened by your lady airs."

"Detain me, and I call to those men on the hill," replied Katharine, indignant at his insolence.

"Ho! Ho! you have a fine high spirit, girl; but so

have I; and you stir not till it pleases me. Come, come: no drawing back with that proud air, and no squalling; —I am your father!"

"It is false!" exclaimed Katharine quickly.

"It is true! Nan tell the girl that I am her father."

"Yes, Kate; he is my husband:—he is, indeed:" she repeated eagerly, seeing her still incredulous.

"Impossible! your husband has been dead for years."

"Not dead, or like to die; though there are those who wish me so, yourself among the number as I see. I won't hurt you, if you don't thwart me; but give me no lady tantrums. Who cares what crazy Nan says?" he observed, looking sharply round at his wife, who cowered beneath his glance, saying, in a deprecating tone—

"I did not tell her any thing."

"So much the better for both. You see the girl is not to be a lady."

The crazy woman did not contradict him in words; but made a sign of dissent behind his back.

Her manner, ever since her husband's appearance, had been a strange mingling of love and fear. It was evident that he held his rule over her by both these passions, but from the harshness of his demeanour it seemed more than probable that the love was solely on her side, that holy feeling which lingers long in woman's heart, outliving coldness, scorn, and cruelty.

Katharine made no remark, assertion, or countersign; but shocked and alarmed at the discovery of such a father; striving to disbelieve, yet compelled to credit the fearful truth, leant against a tree pale and faint, till the man's rude questioning enforced an answer.

"So the proud Mrs. Morven would not have you for a daughter, nor the dandy Earl for a wife. There are wise people in the world!—If James Darrell said it should be done—it should. It is a pity you are not my lady, you could then do something for your father and mother, and now you are of no use; for I hear that mincing Mrs. Arnold, with all her pretty promises, has left you nothing. Is it so?"

"Yes," replied Katharine in a low voice.

"My curse be upon her!" cried her father fiercely, gnashing his teeth.

"Say not so! she was ever kind;—to her I am indebted for being what I am."

"Ah! what you are, indeed;—and there is her shame;—a poor, little, weakly thing, frightened because your father looks at you. How are you to gain your bread, as you must, with those fine lady airs, I should like to know?"

"I cannot tell."

"No, nor any one else. Are you to stay on at the house there with that mean fellow Millar?"

"No; I only wait till I can procure a situation."

"A situation! Scullion, I suppose. That mean wretch should have provided for you and yours;—and he shall, too!"—he added, coming close up to her in the energy of his wrath.

A faint exclamation from Katharine caused him to turn. Two horsemen had come upon them unobserved, owing to the softness of the turf over which they had ridden, and the attention of all three having been engaged in the subject of their discourse. The foremost, a gentleman, looked inquisitively at Katharine after a glance at her companions, making her an ironical bow, which she returned, moving a step towards him as if to claim his protection; then remembering that those from whom she was on the point of seeking his protection were her parents, she stopped abruptly, pained and embarrassed. The gentleman—Mr. Millar—hesitated a moment, and then rode on followed by his servant.

"My curse upon him! I will have something yet," muttered Darrell, clenching his fist, and looking after the horsemen, though he had shrunk back in their presence. "It is time we were off;" he said abruptly, after a short pause. "We must be many miles away before dusk; and sleep at R—to-night: there, you may go now, girl;—but say nothing of having seen me or your mother. Mind this—for I shall have an eye upon you."

"Good bye, Kate! you shall be a lady yet," whispered crazy Nan.

"What are you prating to the girl about? Come along," exclaimed her husband fiercely: and Nan followed on the instant, with a quiet and submissive air, never once thinking of displaying her ragged finery. Could love for one so harsh overpower her usual waywardness and vanity? Who shall fathom the human heart? It was not fear alone which induced her submission; and if more quiet in action whilst with him she also appeared more clear in thought.

Pale and agitated, Katharine reached Beechen Cliff; and here another disappointment came to bow her drooping spirit:—she found an answer from Mrs. Banham. She had need of consolation: but there was none in that letter.—She might have spared herself the anticipated pain of a visit to Sallowfield:—the letter was coldly civil. "Mrs. Banham was sorry to learn her distressing situation, and would inform her should she hear of any thing likely to suit her, highly approving of her intention of gaining her own livelihood, such being clearly her duty. With every good wish, Mrs. Banham remained her's truly, &c." Not one word of George in a postscript as before. Could this be the kind, the warm-hearted Mrs. Banham? And no message from her daughters, who had professed such devoted friendship! The conduct of the Millars and the numerous slights to which she had of late been subject taught Katharine to read the meaning of this letter at a thought. Mrs. Banham and her family threw her off at once;—threw off the fair young creature whom they had so lately petted and caressed, the favourite of their dear—their very dear Mrs. Arnold.

To whom could Katharine now look? She had none on earth to whom to look. Whither could she go? She had no earthly home wherein to rest. And that dark, and harsh, and evil looking man her father!—and that poor crazy thing her mother, claiming the love and duty of a child!—and she could give them neither without shuddering.

There is one who careth for the poor and helpless orphan; and to him she looked and prayed.

It was long ere sleep closed her aching eyes; and then worn out with wo and weeping, she slept dully, heavily, without a dream—so heavily that she woke not, despite the hubbub in the house, till one of the maids came in to tell the news, wondering at her long slumber, yet delighted to find an ignorant and sufficiently astonished listener. The news was quickly told. Thieves had entered the house during the night, carrying off plate and other articles of considerable value without having disturbed any of the family, or left a clue by which they might be traced. The kitchen maid, the earliest riser, had been the first to perceive the robbery and give the alarm. The more minute the investigation, the more were the examiners convinced that the theft had been planned, effected, or assisted by some one well acquainted with the house, and the household arrangements. Katharine's bed-room was so near the principal scene of the robbery, that many marvelled at her not having been awakened.

"Mr. Millar desires to see you in the library," was the unceremonious message delivered almost before the completion of her toilet.

Mr. Millar was seated in a large chair, looking very grand and severe, when Katharine entered; and he neither rose, nor wished her good morning, but motioned her by a haughty wave of the hand to stand before him. If he thought by this to awe her, he was mistaken; colouring slightly at his rudeness, she took a seat at a little distance, remarking with quiet dignity that she understood he wished to speak with her. Annoyed at her self-possession, he endeavoured to assume a grander air, resolved to crush her at once by his vast superiority. What right had a mere girl, with a mother a crazy pauper, and a father perhaps something worse, to be self-possessed in the presence of a man with thousands a-year, and who had acquired some of those magnificent ideas which are soon learnt in

India? His proud and pompous tone should have appalled a delinquent.

"I never condemn without inquiry, that is not my way; but I sift all to the last grain; and never rest till I have found out the truth. So I did in India—so I will do in England. The natives knew it was in vain to attempt to deceive me, and the English will find the same. Who were the man and woman with whom I saw you yesterday? Ha! you are confounded—you give me no answer. Better, for your own sake, tell the truth; I may then be merciful," he added, eyeing her keenly, but with nothing of mercy in his look.

"I do not understand you, sir," replied Katharine proudly, indignant at his overbearing manner; and not admitting his right to put a question, which, as he truly said, had embarrassed her; for, setting aside the startling abruptness of that question, she could not think of Nan Darrell and her husband, particularly the latter, as her parents, without trembling; and to name them as such to another was still more distressing.

"Not understand me, Katharine Darrell? You are no fool, though you may think it pretty to put on a simple, childish manner; nor do I speak so foolishly that you cannot comprehend me. I ask a plain question—a very plain one Who were that man and woman with whom I saw you yesterday?"

"My parents; though I know not by what right you ask."

"Your parents! A worthy object for my aunt's protection, truly! I marvel she did not found an asylum for the children of felons. No wonder that you were ashamed to own them."

"Mrs. Arnold's kindness was extended where kindness was most needed; and gratitude should save her memory from your censure."

The rich, proud man shrank from the look of the poor simple girl before him.

"It is not strange that Mrs. Arnold should give back the money gained by her husband to her husband's family; but it is something singular, her bringing up the

child of such parents, and it would have been much better if among her other lessons she had taught humility."

"She did teach it, Mr. Millar, by precept and example: lay not any fault on her. If I speak warmly in her defence it is because, owing her so much, I cannot bear to hear reproach upon her memory. You have her wealth—leave me my gratitude."

"You mistake, young woman; I never meant to reproach my aunt. I sent for you to ask of those strangers, and we will confine our conversation to that point."

"That point is painful; therefore, having no right to question, you will allow me to retire."

"Painful! I thought as much; but stop, if you please," for she had risen as they spoke. "I have a right to question; and insist on being answered. I am a magistrate—and it is in that capacity I question you."

"A magistrate! and question me?"

"A magistrate—and question you! And you may thank my pity that the examination is a private one; if you refuse to answer me, you must be questioned before others. Do you choose to reply?"

"I know not whether you have the right you claim, or only use an idle threat. With parents but so lately known—so different from those with whom I have been thrown for many years, it is natural that the subject should be painful; nor can I guess why you would question me of them; but, knowing nothing I could wish concealed, I shall not refuse to give the information you require."

"Wisely resolved, though a more humble demeanour would befit you better. Who are your parents?"

"James and Ann Darrell."

"Where do they live?"

"I cannot tell. Till yesterday I did not even know I had a father:—my mother has no fixed abode."

Mr. Millar looked incredulous and angry.

"Take care! I must have candid answers; or shall be compelled to proceed to extremities."

"My answers are candid; though only given to Mrs. Arnold's nephew for her sake."

"You are very considerate," he remarked with a sneer. "How long have your worthy parents been in the neighbourhood?"

"I know not: I only saw them yesterday."

"Whither are they going?"

"I heard them say they must be many miles away ere dark, and sleep at R——— last night."

"When are you to see them again?"

"Never, I hope!" rose to her lips, but, checking the undutiful reply, she merely said, "We did not speak of a future meeting."

"A very prudent silence—or a very cunning answer. And pray, what may this very pleasing looking father of yours be?"

"I do not know. And now I hope, for your sake and for mine, that this cruel interrogation is concluded."

"No, it is not concluded; and you may have to answer before others, who will put more cruel interrogatories. You pretend not to know what your father is—then I will tell you:—he is a thief! a burglar! a midnight robber! and he shall be hanged, if I can catch him! Nay, girl, no fainting—and no folly:—no clasping of your hands—and looking angry and then shocked, as if I had told you some new thing. You know I only speak the truth."

"No! No! it cannot be! it is not the truth?" gasped Katharine, denying as much to convince herself as her hearer; for when she thought of her father's look and threatening words, she was not quite so certain of his innocence as she could wish; and the fearful suspicion so shocked and overcome her that she sank back in her chair, pale, faint, and scarcely able to understand the darker accusations which, unmoved by her sufferings, he poured forth on his helpless victim.

"It is the truth, girl! and you know it; though you act your part so well that you might deceive those who know not, as I know, how you twined round my aunt, till she believed you little short of angel. I repeat—it is the truth! The villian was seen skulking about

here early yesterday morning and late last night; and is now nowhere to be found. I myself saw you talking to him, and you looked frightened and ashamed when I came in sight. The thieves must have been assisted by some one well acquainted with the premises—you gave no alarm, though their entering the room immediately below yours must have awakened you—you refuse to furnish an account of the comings and goings of your honest parents:—Katharine Darrell, you are an accomplice!"

Poor Kate! the appearance of fortitude which she had with difficulty maintained, during this trying interview, gave way at this dreadful accusation. She felt at a thought, indignant as she was, all the horrors of her situation; poor, friendless—with such parents—and with such a foe as her pitiless accuser. Uttering a faint scream, she dropped senseless from her chair.

On recovering, she found herself lying on her bed; Mrs. Millar's maid, a cold-hearted, supercilious, fine lady, applying restoratives, little caring whether they were effectual or not.

"You are well again now, so I may go," was her remark as Katharine stared wildly round the room; leaving the apartment the moment after, glad to escape a disagreeable office.

When the whole truth was clearly understood by the bewildered Kate she sank back on the pillow with hysterical sobs. What would become of her? She, the object of the tenderest love for so many years, shielded from every shock—nurtured delicately—shrinking with woman's sensitiveness from notice and publicity—was she to be dragged before a crowd of strangers, to answer to a dreadful accusation? to become an object of wonder, curiosity, and contempt?—to be associated in the public mind with those from the idea of whose relationship she shrank with disgust and horror?—called on to stand a trial with a father, whose very look and manner told of guilt—or obliged to give evidence against him?—if acquitted,—still with the shame and agony of trial?—if condemned?—she hid her face on the pillow to shut out the horrid vision; but it was still

before her, in darkness as in light. Her limbs shook, and the cold dew stood on her marble brow.

But Mr. Millar could not believe her guilty—would not bring such a charge against the adopted child of his aunt—would not really think her leagued with wicked men to rob that house, which had so long been her happy home. He would not persist in the accusation—he would not subject her to further shame. She would strive to hope :—but she thought of his looks and tone when he said, "Katharine Darrell, you are an accomplice," and her hope died away. From him she could expect no pity. From man she could not look for aid. She had no friend on earth !—she was alone ! Then came the thought of Ermiston—of him whom she had so fondly, truly loved, to give a deeper pang. Had he but felt, as she had felt, how different had been her fate ! Deeply did she feel

> "Not with her own heart's lovingness,
> Had she been loved again."

There was a low knocking at her chamber door. She checked her sobs as she best might, and bade the person enter, turning away, as her bidding was obeyed, unwilling that her sorrow should be looked on by an unfeeling eye, and expecting to hear some painful and insulting message.

She heard no message ; but, after a few moments, came a sob as loud, as full of grief as had been her own. She turned to look on the intruder. There stood Mrs. Shaw—the prim, the formal Mrs. Shaw, sobbing as a child sobs at its first deep grief.

Every distinction of late years was forgotten : in an instant she was in her arms, clinging round her neck as she used to cling around her in her childish days. She knew, she felt, she was not desolate—not quite alone :—she had still one friend left ; and, humble as the world might deem that friend, she was to her worth all the treasures of the earth.

And who could ever have found fault again with Mrs. Shaw, for being prim, and formal, and prosy, and

a little out of temper at times, who had heard her sobs as she clasped the poor desolate Kate to her heart, soothing, caressing her, as she had done in former days, even calling her her own dear little Kate in the emotion of the moment, without being shocked till afterwards at the impropriety? All this, too, not in ignorance of the charge against her favourite, but knowing and defying it, having been informed of it by Mr. Millar, who had at first refused her admission to Katharine, though she had come many miles on purpose to see her.

It was not long before Katharine was pouring out her sorrows to the sympathising Mrs. Shaw; who, notwithstanding her sympathy, it must be admitted, was regaining some of her primness, when no longer under the spell of a sudden and powerful emotion; but this very primness and peculiarity was most strongly developed in her increasing show of respect:—her delicate, her almost over-scrupulous fear lest, inadvertently, she should awaken the idea that she was presuming in the slightest degree on the fallen fortunes of her whom she was addressing. With the petted favourite of Mrs. Arnold, and the supposed heiress of her wealth, Mrs. Shaw, though much attached, had occasionally found fault and exhibited ill humour; but to Kate Darrell, the poor, the friendless, the destitute, with a charge of felony hanging over her head, she was the most humble, the most respectful, yet the most affectionate of domestics.

It is great injustice to assert that delicacy of feeling is confined to the higher ranks, and is the offspring of refinement and education; these may nourish and increase, but they cannot give it. It is innate—the child of the untutored heart—the very essence of the beautiful:—chained to no climate—bounded to no rank.

We have seen the wealthy, those who thought themselves the great ones of the earth, take leave of those of fallen fortunes with undimmed eye and steady voice, as though they knew not that there was cause for sorrow, guess not that the heart was well nigh broken, and only stayed the expression of its grief that the cold gaze might not mock it. We have seen the lowly ones of earth, lowly in station but how high in worth! part

from the same; and the lip could not speak for the heart's feeling; and the tears of the mourner, repressed before lest the cold should mock, mingled with theirs. The first passed on with stately step, and a cold offer of future service:—the last plucked the only rose from the favourite tree, and placed it by the traveller's cloak with a trembling hand and quivering lip. They thought that the traveller would prize it as a memorial of a once happy home. That single rose—and its kind and delicate giver, can they ever be forgotten? If all the memories of misfortune were like that, who would not be unfortunate? What feeling so endearing, so ennobling, as gratitude? Even love, though it may have more of beauty and of brightness, is not so generous and so pure.

Before night Katharine was on her way to B——— with Mrs. Shaw, or rather Mrs. Carter, she having married the butler, the former footman at Cowford, as Mrs. Millar had said; and that, too, without another interview with the possessor of Beechen Cliff, and with an assurance that she should not be called on to defend a charge of felony against her father or herself. Of the means by which this change had been effected, Kate only clearly understood that Mrs. Carter had been the agent, so shaming the Millars by her representations, that they not only promised neither to molest Katharine nor spread their suspicions, but also gave her the two hundred pounds of which Mrs. Millar had before spoken. In what temper the negociation had been carried on, could only be gathered from Mrs. Carter's increased rigidity, and contemptuous tone when speaking of the Millars, as she refused to furnish a detail of the conversation.

"One thing only she would say, to clear her poor, dear mistress: Mrs. Arnold thought she had provided handsome, most handsome for Miss Darrell; and if the Millars were wicked people she could not help it; but her young lady need not scruple taking the two hundred pounds, for they owed her much more. Words were not parchment, as she had learnt from Mr. Bennett,—or things would not be as they were."

When questioned further, Mrs. Carter only primmed up her lips, drew up her thin figure, and talked of pru-

dence, discretion, and the uselessness of telling what could bring no good.

"She had heard the report of Katharine's intended removal, and, thinking that her young lady might wish to be quiet for some time, she had made bold enough to come over to say, that she had a small parlour and bedroom at her house which she should feel very proud if Miss Darrell would occupy till she was tired of living in the same place. She could never rejoice enough at arriving when she did; for she verily believed Mr. Millar would hang her young mistress if he could."

By the evening of the next day Katharine was quietly established in Mrs. Carter's parlour; she, and her worthy husband waiting on her, and, as much as was in their power, anticipating her wishes more readily, and respectfully, if possible, than in her days of prosperity; her only difficulty being to prevent them from providing many of the luxuries to which she had been accustomed, under the pretence of their having been made presents to themselves, and to induce Mrs. Carter to consider herself in the light of an esteemed, though humble friend, rather than as a mere servant; or the mistress of a lodging house.

Mr. Carter displayed the few silver spoons, and other articles, which the worthy couple had procured for the use of their lodger, to the best advantage; and, as much as possible, in the same order as she had been used to at Beechen Cliff, performing for her many little offices of servitude, which he would have refused to perform for another, as being beneath the dignity of an ex-butler.

Mrs. Carter, in the like spirit, arranged every thing for the toilet on the model of what had been at Beechen Cliff:—called her—robed her—laid out—put away—made, and mended, just as she had done in former days, never once giving way, as of old, to the vagaries of a middling temper, at least in Katharine's presence; though she did occasionally, if vexed, hint to her husband, with a very dignified air, that but for his talking at Sallowfield no one might have known of Miss Darrell's birth; and she might then have been a rich Countess instead of a poor Miss.

"Not that it was any great loss to my mind, since he

could give her up so easily," she would add. "I never liked him much; he seemed formal to me."

This reproach was always borne in silence, the culprit only proving his regret by redoubled care and attention.

There was only one grand point in which Katharine and Mrs. Carter disagreed: and this, after various discussions, was carried in favour of the former; but it was long before the good woman would hear with any patience of her seeking a situation, or assist in her plans for procuring one.

"If Miss Darrell did not like the house;—and did not find things comfortable; and did not think she and her husband were respectable, or pleasant people to lodge with;—and did not like their ways; she could go away certainly—she had a right to go; and she was sure she would not try to keep her against her will;" and away marched Mrs. Carter with an air that it would have puzzled a Siddons to have out-dignified, heedless of all Katharine's entreaties to remain and listen to her explanations.

"You would not hear me in the parlour, Mrs. Carter, so I am come into the kitchen; and you will not turn me out," said Kate, placing her hands caressingly on her arm. "I do like the house, and above all Mr. and Mrs. Carter, and all their ways;—strange if I did not, when they have proved themselves such generous friends," she added, her tears falling as she spoke. "Had I money to live here I would not go away: and you must believe this, for it is true; but I have not the money, and must use those advantages which my more than mother gave me to acquire independence, if only to justify her kindness, and prove myself not quite unworthy of her love."

"You have quite money enough, if you would but stay," said Mrs. Carter eagerly; "there are the two hundred pounds."

"I owe much of that already; and as it cannot support me long, I must seek some situation before I have spent it all."

"You owe nothing;—I have paid every bill, and there is something left in the purse you gave me still; and

we can put out the two hundred pounds; and you can live upon the interest."

Katharine smiled through her tears at the kind device of her faithful servant.

"I am but a simpleton, dear Mrs. Carter, I admit; but I know a little more of the value of money than that. You forget that I often paid the bills and settled the accounts. I know, as well as you do, that the interest of two hundred pounds, place it where you may, will hardly find my clothes; and I really am no fairy to live on the dew of the cowslip and the harebell; on the contrary, as you know, I am quite an epicure, and delight in the nice little dishes you provide me. Come now," caressing her playfully, though her tears fell all the while, "you must let me coax you into letting me have my own way, as you say I used to do when I was your little Kate. You have already done much more for me than I can ever repay;—but for you I might have been tried, perhaps condemned to a shameful death;" and she shuddered as she spoke:—"But for you, I should have been houseless, friendless; without money; or those articles I prize so highly, as her gift, and that you so boldly claimed and brought away. I might have been a poor, helpless, crazy creature as my mother, for I felt madness coming over me. You took me from the cruel and the cold, and nursed me into health; and now you must do more—help me to show the world, at least that part to whom my name is known, that I am no disgrace to Mrs. Arnold's teaching, and no idle upstart; but one grateful for the blessings of her childhood, grateful for the love and tutoring of her benefactress, striving to walk through life to do that tutoring honour. Were I to do as you desire, I should pine day by day beneath a consciousness of shame. You will let me have my will, dear, dear nurse Shaw, as I used to call you?—and you will help me, too?"

And, after a while, kind Mrs. Carter did let her have her own way; and even assisted her in it; but not without occasional grumblings.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The wild romance of life is done;
The real history begun."
"And one replied—
But not the voice she pined to hear."

TIME passed, and still Katharine Darrell was at Mrs. Carter's. It seemed as if young ladies no longer wanted to be instructed, or old ladies to be amused: no one required governess, teacher, or companion; at least, no one would employ Katharine in either capacity. She was too young, or too pretty; or she could not do this—or she could not do that. In vain she protested that she could and would do every thing, for any thing;—then came the grand point—who would recommend her? Mrs. Carter might be a very respectable person in her station, but that was not exactly the station from which recommendations were expected. Besides the story of her match with Lord Ermiston having been broken off on account of the character of her mother; and her father being suspected of some share in the robbery at Beechen Cliff had been bruited abroad, so that no sooner was her name announced, than the few who had thought of her for a moment backed out of the engagement as speedily as possible.

Poor Kate was well nigh in despair, when Mrs. Carter, seeing that her heart was set on success, after fidgetting and stammering for some time gave her to understand that she had that day received a letter from the widow of a cousin of her's, a man well to do in the world, who wished her to look out for a young person who could read to her, and write for her, keep the house, mend the linen, make up her caps, be always good tempered and willing—in short, one who would make herself useful in every way; and all, as the criers of murders say, for the small sum of—twenty pounds.

"Mrs. Carter was quite ashamed to offer this to Miss

Darrell. She who had been brought up so delicately to go at a servant's wages,—to do more than a servant's work! But she saw that she was fretting herself ill at being idle; and she had heard that her cousin-in-law, whom she had never seen, was a very good sort of person."

The style of the letter, the requisitions in wholesale, and the salary in detail, did not promise well; but Kate considered it a duty to accept the situation, no other offering, and within a fortnight she was established with Mrs. Dixon at T——— a dirty seaport town on the western coast.

Mr. Carter had escorted her down, his wife being too ill at the time to venture on the journey; and though even he, a not over-penetrating and charitable person, could perceive that Mrs. Dixon was not Mrs. Arnold, he saw nothing in her conduct to himself or Katharine, during his short stay, to prevent his believing that the latter might be tolerably comfortable.

Tolerably comfortable! Poor Kate soon ceased to be of Mr. Carter's opinion; and her continuance in the situation, supporting its trials with silent patience, was an act of duty rather than inclination;—the consequence of a constant struggle against discontent, not an impulse of pleasure or gratitude. Perhaps Mrs. Dixon did not at first mean to be unkind, but with no taste in common with her companion, and with what might be called coarse feelings, in contradistinction to fine ones, she was perpetually wounding and annoying her.

The widow of a merchant, as she called him, (wholesale dealer would have been more correct,) and possessed at his death of considerable wealth, she determined on setting up for a lady, believing that, with fine clothes, a handsome house, a good table, and a companion, she should have no difficulty in performing the part, not only to her own satisfaction, but that of all her acquaintance. That wealth could not make a lady; and that rudeness to a companion was not a proof of being a gentlewoman, were truths which she had yet to learn. Fine clothes could do little towards making a naturally vulgar face and figure elegant;—procuring a companion

to write her notes could not perfect herself in grammar, orthography, or pronunciation; but, unconscious of defect in these particulars, she expected that her society should be not only prized, but courted; a point on which she was over anxious and touchy. Painful as were her vulgarity and ignorance to one accustomed to the refined and elegant mind of Mrs. Arnold, Katharine might have overlooked these deficiencies, and, with her grateful disposition, have become in time attached to her; but that unhappily the heart had also glaring and innumerable failings. She might not originally have had a bad temper and a revengeful disposition; but puffed up by riches, and prompted by vanity, she now expected and desired all to bow down before her; yet, unable to forget the mean and penurious ways by which her wealth had been acquired, she would haggle for a sixpence with a tradesman, or a post-boy, though to gratify that vanity which destroyed her peace, she would spend pounds upon her dress and table, or any thing that might win admiration. To make a bargain, and to make a show, were her ruling passions. Had she been contented to associate with those in her own rank, her wealth might have enabled her to gratify the desires of her vanity, and she might have been a happy woman, in the lowest meaning of the word, if not a worthy one; but some demon whispered—"*Dixon, be a lady.*"

She made the attempt; and from that moment she was miserable.

We will not detail the hourly vexations which Katharine endured from her combined meanness and vanity. She could not be quite blind to her companion's superiority, and whilst she kept her to gratify her love of show, she also took every opportunity of annoying her, to gratify her love of rule. Act as Katharine would, her conduct was never as it should be. One day she was accused of putting herself too forward—the next of being too cold and proud to Mrs. Dixon's friends:—and the many rebuffs which that lady received in her attempts to force herself into society above her, were sure to be visited on Kate; first, in feeling a community of shame in the rebuff; and next, in the endurance

of the sneers of Mrs. Dixon, who, having accidentally heard some of her history, and fished out more from the unsuspecting Mr. Carter, could thus give point to sarcasms which might otherwise have scarcely wounded. It was now that Katharine felt how surely an education and refinement above the natural station must prove a curse and not a blessing; causing misery where it was intended to bring happiness—evil coming out of an injudicious good;—and this more particularly in the case of feeble woman, who cannot compel a higher destiny. Every day brought more painfully before her the contrast of the present and the past:—the elegance at Beechen Cliff—the pretending vulgarity in Prospect Row;—the gentleness and affection of Mrs. Arnold—the petty jealousy and worrying malice of Mrs. Dixon.

A cloud came over her naturally sweet and happy temper—her grateful heart was chilled—her spirit bowed beneath the hourly vexations to which it was exposed, and from which she saw no escape—for whither could she go? She knew too well the difficulty of procuring a situation; and she could not and would not be a burden on kind Mrs. Carter.

Day by day was the young, gay spirit saddened more and more:—day by day faded the loveliness of youth; its happy gaiety, its freshness, and its hope. The eyes which had once danced in brightness were now dimmed by tears—the cheek which had glowed, or faded at a word, a thought, was now ever pale and thin;—the joyous laugh, the gush of happiness was hushed;—the light and playful sally heard no more. The natural eloquence of thought and feeling would have been thrown away or mocked; and to save herself as she best might from unpleasant remarks she rarely spoke but when addressed; and then her words were cold and studied.

Had Mrs. Carter only guessed a thousandth part of her vexations she would have been in Prospect Row within many hours; and strange if she had returned alone: but she did not guess them, for Katharine kept those vexations to herself, not to pain the only being upon earth who loved her, always compelling herself to write in a cheerful strain.

To the wretched, the prospect of a change of scene

gives the prospect of a change of fate, and Katharine heard with a rather lightened spirit that Mrs. Dixon intended making a little tour through some parts of Devonshire, and then passing over into Wales.

Alas! a change of scene does not always bring a change of feeling or a lightening of sorrow, and Katharine was forced to admit, after two or three days travelling, that a continuance in Prospect Row, with all its vexations, would have been preferable, notwithstanding her admiration of the beautiful scenery presented to her observation.

Mrs. Dixon's jealousy and vanity, her passion for being treated as a person of consequence, and her passion for making a bargain, were not left behind; but unhappily travelled with her. The post-boys and coachmen were always grumbling and insolent—the innkeepers always extortionate and impertinent, at least so said Mrs. Dixon to Katharine.

"Mrs. Dixon is always harsh, mean, and grasping," said Katharine to herself, so that, as may be supposed, her cheek regained no bloom, her eye no brightness; mind and form were fading—sorrow setting its mark on both.

Robertson says somewhere, I think in his history of South America, that the subdivision of trades marks the degree of civilization; now, the 19th century boasts of its civilization, and hence a very minute subdivision of labour. Let each keep to his own peculiar branch of art. This is a novel, not an itinerary, so we will suppose the Devonshire tour nearly concluded, and Mrs. Dixon and her companion gone to rest at the Golden Lion, at Barnstable, in a double-bedded room with two doors; the one opening into a passage, the other, close to which stood Katharine's couch, (a poetical term, and therefore fitter for a heroine,) into a sitting-room, as Kate was doomed to learn to her annoyance.

It was nearly one o'clock:—Mrs. Dixon was fast asleep, of which she had given proof for the last two hours; and poor Katharine, after a long weeping, had just fallen into a light slumber, so light that the faintest noise would break it. It was no faint noise by which it was to be broken.

No one but Mrs. Dixon could have slept through the loud ringing of bells, and the almost as loud clatter of tongues, which preceded the entrance of a large party into the room close to the side of Katharine's bed.

All the troops at Kalisch, and the innumerable crowned and uncrowned personages there assembled, could scarcely have occasioned more riot, uproar, and confusion; yet there were some among the party who were any thing but rude or boisterous; and there was one voice that met her ear, of which Katharine drank in every tone as though her life depended on not losing one. There was no question of honour or dishonour in listening, even had she not been too much agitated to argue the point; for she could not help over-hearing every word, her door being so slight and ill-fitted; besides that, one of those just arrived being deaf, the whole party had acquired the habit of speaking loud;—and who in their senses would tell secrets in an inn, save in the faintest whisper?

The first few sentences referred to the adventures of the party on the road, including an overturn, and other delays which accounted for their late arrival; and Katharine was no further interested in the detail than to wish that their arrival had been delayed till the morning, or that she could sleep through the hubbub like Mrs. Dixon, when a name and a question arrested and enforced her attention during the remainder of their stay.

"So this is the Golden Lion! I wonder among the innumerable discoveries making every day whether such an animal will be presented to the public? By the bye, Ermiston, was not that the inn to which was bound the graceful dame whose talent for bargaining you so much admired?"

"I know nothing about it," replied a voice, at which Katharine's heart beat quick:—a voice that could never be forgotten, though it should not again address her in the tones of affection.

"Not know any thing about it? That is a good one, Ermiston! but I shall not believe you in spite of your short answer. Whilst I was laughing ready to kill myself at the bargaining and disputing of the elderly dame,

don't pretend to tell me that you were not watching that pale, slight girl, shrinking back in shame at her friend's vulgarity and meanness ; and watching her with a more than common interest, too, though you turned away the moment you believed yourself observed. I never saw you look thus before, and suspect she was an old acquaintance."

"Nonsense, Mr. Ward ! my cousin is not at all likely to have seen the girl before, as my maid says she is the companion of that vulgar woman, who taunted her with having pauper parents," replied a female voice with the intonation of pettishness.

"It is not proved that all which your maid asserts is true ; nor is it an absolute certainty that your treble refined cousin has never made any acquaintance in the female line beneath Lady Richmond and her elegant sister, Miss Clarendon," replied the first speaker, with an admirable mimicry of her ladyship's rather mincing manner, and its tinge of vexation. "A pretty girl is a pretty girl, whether in high or low life ; and earls have wedded pauper's daughters."

"You do not know Lord Ermiston ; he would never think of marrying beneath him," replied the lady, who, as Mr. Ward suspected, had set her heart on having the Earl for her brother-in-law.

"I am not so sure of that, Lady Richmond ; his look was no common look, so you had better keep a good watch over your cousin, or, exquisitely fastidious as he is, you may have a pauper countess cousin yet. I am thoroughly convinced they had met before. Is it not so, Ermiston ?" questioned Mr. Ward, who had set out in life with the resolve of amusing himself let who would be the sufferer. "You see he cannot say no ; and is afraid to say yes," he continued after a pause, receiving no reply, and urged to proceed by the annoyance he occasioned. "Depend upon it they are old friends—perhaps lovers. I have it ! this is the clever charity girl with the crazy mother, who so nearly took him in ; Darrell I think they call her, and would have been Countess of Ermiston, had not his stately mother saved him from her clutches. Confess, Ermiston."

Shocked—ashamed—still Katharine listened eagerly to catch the Earl's reply, involuntarily checking her breathing, lest she should lose a word. She thought she heard a muttered "Folly!" and a sudden rising; both half lost in Ward's light laugh; and then came another well known voice, its tones clear, full, and indignant.

"If you will have your jest, Ward, without regard to the feelings of others, choose some other subject than Miss Darrell; who is incapable of any act unfitting the most delicately minded woman. She never entertained the idea of taking in Lord Ermiston; and though unfortunate in her mother, the noblest in the land might be proud to obtain her as his bride."

"Heyday! Herbert Eustace turned Quixote!—*Preux chevalier!* Defender of Damsels! What eloquence of tongue! what flashing of dark eyes! You should be shamed, Ermiston. So you are, I see; not best pleased—envious of the honours which your cousin has achieved; playing old nurse to a wounded post-boy, and then entering at a critical moment to defend a slandered damsel. Pray, did you know this peerless beggar girl! Yes, you did, now I recollect. Perhaps you were rivals, which accounts for your gallant defence."

"Scarcely, methinks, in the eyes of the world; as, if rivals, Ermiston was the favoured one."

"True; you were not rivals, or you would have boasted of not having been taken in, and been wrath at my supposition, instead of answering with such perfect indifference. Did you see that pale, elegant girl, with the bargaining mistress, for such it seems she is?"

"You forget that I did not return from sketching till just as you left Bideford, so only heard your very amusing account of the bargainer."

"True again. Why you are getting all truth since you lost your title; and are not half such an amusing person as of old."

"A plain Mr. cannot be expected to be as entertaining as a Baronet."

"True, a third time; but you bore the loss well. I

should have shot my uncle and cousin, and then fled the country; instead of which, you gave up every thing with an over-punctilious honour, and took to studying the law in earnest, to the wonder of all the wiseacres, who, after laughing at the idea, are compelled to admit that you are a rising young man; briefs pouring in on you daily, from your skilful defence of that poor old fellow at Winchester; whose cause you were laughed at for undertaking without a fee."

"It was a good cause, and I was not sorry to dedicate my powers, as it were, to honesty and humanity, pleading my first brief for nothing; time enough to grow selfish and politic—if I must so grow."

"Must so grow? to be sure! If all men were honest and liberal, you gentlemen of the long robe would fare but ill, I trow; the lives of the briefless would be brief indeed. I am for getting wealth and amusement, how you can, and when you can. 'Each for himself, and God for us all,' that is my maxim."

"Each for himself may be succeeded by God for none; and, even in this world, the selfish rich man has not a hundreth part of the happiness of a generous poor one."

"I cry pecavi, if you mean to turn methodist preacher, Eustace. All of a piece with defending beggar men and beggar girls. *Vive la Bagatelle!* is my motto, so I shall play up to that bargaining piece of vulgarity, that I may exchange pretty nothings with her delicate-looking companion,—companions and governesses are hired to amuse and be useful. What say you, Lord Richmond, am I not right?"

"Very silly and disagreeable, indeed," replied his deaf lordship with an earnest gravity, which caused a general laugh.

"What is the matter? People always laugh at what I say."

"No wonder," thought his very affectionate wife—his bride not quite a year.

"The matter is this, Lord Richmond; I am so much affronted at your calling me silly and disagreeable, that I shall take my departure. Exit the elegant Ward!"

making an attempt as he spoke to open the door close to Katharine's head.

"Who offers the reward?" asked his lordship. "You all speak so low that there is no hearing a word you say. I am not deaf that you need halloo; but it is a very bad habit you have all got into talking so low."

"Talking so low!" thought Katharine. "I wish they had."

"I am sure Mr. Ward has been shouting like a town crier; but you get deafer and deafer, wanting to hear everything, yet understanding nothing," replied his young wife contemptuously.

How few the months since she had modulated her tones to suit his infirmity! She was a portionless girl then—she was a rich wife now.

"It must be fastened on the other side," exclaimed Mr. Ward, still racketing at the door, to poor Katharine's utter horror, who expected him every moment to burst headlong into her apartment, so fragile was the door—so frail the fastenings.

Should this happen, and the pale sickly companion be identified with the beggar girl who had nearly taken in Lord Ermiston, how should she survive the shame? Yet she had no means of averting the peril—she could not beg him to desist—she scarcely even dared to move, so narrow was the space between the door and bed;—she could but lie in silent terror—breathless—motionless—faint with the excess of fear.

"Pray, do not make such a noise Ward, you distract Lady Richmond; and they will take you for some vulgar traveller, observed Lord Ermiston with a sharpness unusual to him, probably not sorry of a legitimate cause for rebuke.

"I am determined to see where this door leads to," answered Ward pettishly, employing a force which promised to accomplish his wishes.

Katharine gave up all for lost.

"You shall do no such thing whilst you form one of our party," said Herbert Eustace decidedly, laying a strong grasp upon his arm. We have no right to disturb the rest of others, because by choice or accident we tra-

vel late ourselves. You have already been far more noisy than is creditable," he added, confirmed in his former suspicion that Mr. Ward was not quite as sober as he should be.

"What do you please to want, sir?" demanded two almost breathless waiters rushing in at opposite doors.

"Why, to go to bed, to be sure."

"This way, if you please, sir: you can't go there. This is the way to your room, and missis hopes that you will go quietly, for the whole house is up;" and the loud ringing of bells confirmed his assertion.

"If people will go to bed so early, they deserve to be disturbed," said Ward, as he followed the waiter.

Not once again during that long, long night, did Catharine close her eyes. When her fear of a forcible entry had passed away, the memory of the conversation still remained, paining—torturing. She had heard a voice she never thought to hear again:—but how had she heard it? Not speaking in defence of her. No! No! though she had listened as if her life were on his words. He had heard her jested on—accused of art—and yet had said no word in her defence; admitting, by his silence, the justice of the charge. Could she have acted thus? Could he have ever loved?

But one had spoken—spoken warmly in her favour; —the one whom she had rejected for him who was silent. Was she grateful? Did she thank him in her heart, as he deserved? No: she was unjust to Herbert Eustace—she was ungrateful. She felt something like anger towards him. He had spoken so quickly—he was always forward;—had he waited but one moment longer he whom she had loved might have defended her. And how delightful to be defended by that one to whom the heart still clings. He had interfered when he was not required;—he had stepped in impertinently, taking another's place. She hoped never to meet him; —his presence would bring back the shame and grief of that night to her mind.

Katharine Darrell was no angel—she was but a woman; a weak and loving woman:—she could not bear that he to whom she had been attached shou

outdone in generous and honourable feeling by another: —she disliked that other for his very superiority, which she could not but feel, yet would not admit.

Oh, the shame and the sorrow of that weary night!

How thankful was she that Mrs. Dixon had slept through all the noise, a marvellous occurrence certainly, and how much more thankful was she that their departure for Ilfracomb at a very early hour marred Mr. Ward's intention of making acquaintance with the vulgar bargainer, the better to amuse himself with the companion hired to be useful. Even the beauties of Ilfracomb were scarcely admired, so eager was she to embark for Swansea, and thus avoid an encounter with Lady Richmond's party, who had proposed proceeding thither after a visit to Linton and Lymouth.

She had taken her seat on board—Mrs. Dixon, after haggling with the grumbling porter, had paid twopence less than he demanded—the packet had passed out of the harbour, and then Katharine looking back with a sigh grieved at the impossibility of a meeting which she had a few moments since so dreaded.

Could she have looked upon him!—seen him, though only for one instant, and without his knowledge! She would have run the risk of enduring the impertinence of Mr. Ward only for one moment's sight of Lord Ermiston.

Their paths might never cross again. She might not live long—if she could but have looked upon him once before she died! And why should she look upon him? She was—she could be nothing more to him. His mother had said leave her—and he had left her! A stranger blamed—and he was silent! It mattered not: —still she longed to looked upon his face once more.

The weakness of humanity was her's. She pined for that when beyond her reach which she had dreaded when likely to be presented to her. Regret was vain; —Swansea was reached; and no Ermiston had met her view.

END OF VOL. I.